

Rumbling on performativity

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Rumbling on performativity

The complex practice
of policy development
in a University of Applied Sciences



Frits Simon

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Rumbling on performativity

The complex practice of policy development
in a University of Applied Sciences

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geboren op 21 februari 1954 te Sittard

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*Some fools seek knowledge high and higher
To M.A., PhD aspire
Though people deem them very bright
These fools can't understand aright.*

Sebastian Brant (1494)

Preface

When you are working on a PhD it is quite common to read a lot written by other people. For some time I assumed that the writers of all these books and articles thank in a rather dutiful way other people for their support during their research. I know better now!

Sincerely I express my gratitude for all the people who supported me.

It was great fun to work with and to learn from Thijs Homan, Nol Groot, Herman van den Bosch and Rob Zijderhoudt, 'despite' that they are very creative and persistent in raising a lot of questions. I will miss the discussions with deep digging Doug Griffin. Without the involvement of Rob Bouwman, Walter Bolwerk, Cees Brouwer and Philippe Devos it would have been a lonely ride in the twilight zone of doing research next to a job, a family and a social life. Regrettably the intensive discussions, my learning group and Karel V will be gone. For all this the PhD-school of the Open University offered an inspiring environment.

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Quite some other people were bothered by me and generously spend some of their precious time. To respect their privacy I am unable to show them my gratitude by calling their names in public. Be assured that without their investment I would have been unable to finish my research.

I thank Mariet, the love of my life, for her lasting tolerance of my repeatedly wool-gathering. For Sanne, Tijn and Pelle it will be clear now why they had to drag so many books the times we moved. Thanks for that and many other things.

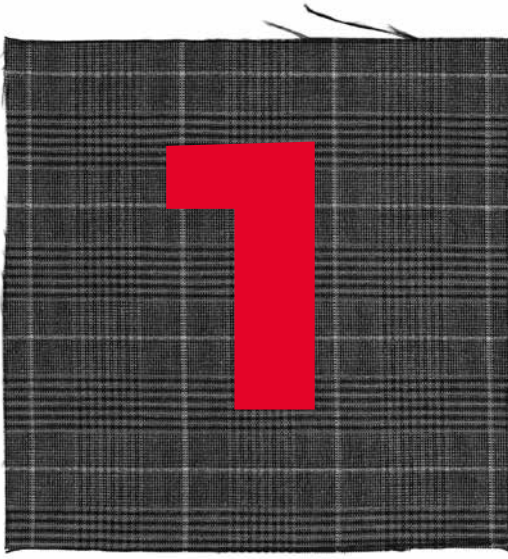
Frits Simon

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Introduction: research into performativity from a 'personal' perspective

As the reader will notice it has not been the most common way of doing research which is reported about in this thesis. The research as reported about has been research from a reflexive and as the case may be from a 'personal' point of view. Although reflexive research already has a tradition of more than 30 years, this kind of research often leads to intense debates about the demands for sound research.

To introduce and explain the reflexive research I have undertaken I will discuss different topics in this chapter. Due to the 'personal' point of departure I will explain something of the background of my work within the University of Applied Sciences I work for (from now on abbreviated as UAS; see further 1.1). As an adviser to the board an important duty of me is to develop and implement policy at an institutional level. In my experience institutional policy is subjected to the demands of performativity, a topic of which I better learned to understand the whereabouts during my research. I will indicate how performativity came to be the main subject of my research (see 1.2). I will do that by indicating what an on performativity oriented institutional policy implies, and at the same time stipulate that even if performativity is taken seriously the results of policy appear to be quite paradoxical. Next I will clarify why I came to do research from a reflexive and/or 'personal' perspective on institutional policy. I will go into the subject of insider research. The rise of insider research during the last 30 years is related to discussions about the practical results of research within the field of Organization and Management Studies (OMS). Shortly I will elaborate on these discussions (see 1.3). Concerning insider research I will offer a first introduction of what it means to do research from a complex responsive process perspective, being a specific approach of insider research (see 1.4). A complex responsive process-approach evolved in the last decade of the 20th century and is an approach of research which I came to know during my research. To finish this chapter I will present a short overview of what to expect from my research (see 1.5).

1.1 Personal, professional and societal background of my research

For more than 30 years I work for the UAS in positions varying from lecturer, dean and adviser to the board. If I have to believe the caricaturist way all UAS's are framed in Dutch public media I would say that I work for an immoral organization. UAS's are framed as having bad educational quality, committing financial fraud, lacking supervision of students, and undertaking ill-considered and unsuccessful educational innovations (Gendt and Ritzen, 2011). On top societal commotion stirs up about exorbitant salaries, fraudulent declarations and megalomaniac plans (Berkeljon, 2012; Bommeljé, 2013; Cort, 2012; Giesen, 2010; Goossen, 2012; Heuvel, 2012; Pous, 2012; Willigenburg, 2011c). It seems that a lot of public money is spent on wrong things.

During all these 30 years the UAS is safeguarded against eye-catching derailments, but as other UAS's the UAS internally and externally is called to account for an assu-

med lack of effectiveness in performances. Apparently daily work of a lot of people, the change programmes, quality projects and managerial efforts have disappointing results. However, it is enigmatic that at the same time the UAS seems to do well in view of the high position on the Dutch UAS's ranking lists. Apparently we never succeed in satisfying public demands, despite the demands of and the position in the ranking framework, and despite of all the efforts we undertake.

This long-lasting dissatisfaction with UAS's has led to paradoxical consequences. On the one hand governmental educational policy has promoted greater autonomy, responsibility and accountability of the UAS's to encourage effective policy with regard to education (and later on research). On the other hand the amount and intensity of control to measure the effectiveness of the policy has grown disproportionately. In due course autonomy has become heavily restrained by intensive control. For the interested reader a brief historic overview (based on Bemmels, 2014) of developments may clarify that.

Textbox 1: A historic excursion: autonomy and mounting control within UAS's

During my career incessant topics regarding Higher Education have become quality, funding, autonomy, accountability and governability. In 1983 – just after I had started my career in Higher Education – the Dutch government initiated a policy which led to scaling up of most of the polytechnic institutions for Higher Education. With the mergers a re-allocation and concentration of tasks among the UAS's was intended. Lump sum financing was introduced because of the continuous exceeding of budgets by the Ministry of Education. The policy intended to promote greater autonomy, responsibility and accountability of the institutions.

For many years the UAS's united in the Netherlands Association of UAS's tried to enervate discussions about (the assumed lack of) educational quality. In 1989 a national system of quality assurance was introduced by the UAS's themselves, through which they accounted for their quality of education. In 1997 the association promoted the development of national standards for all the study-programmes, followed in 2009 by the introduction of standards regarding the level of bachelor-programmes. However, the results of the self-management by the UAS's apparently do not satisfy Dutch government and are much discussed in the parliament and the media due to some incidents. After the introduction of research in 2001 as an assignment for the UAS's, in 2003 education and research became objects of a national system of accreditation. The performance agreements which in 2012 every UAS had to make with the State Secretary for Education (Zijlstra, 2011) are a recent exemplar of dissatisfaction with self-management of the UAS's. These agreements require performances on the effectiveness and efficiency of the education regarding quality of results, differentiation and valorisation of education and research. To forestall a lack of performances these

agreements are connected to conditional financing of a part of the yearly budget of the various UAS's. Beforehand it is made clear which party is to frame for failures. As always UAS's are forced onto the defensive.

In the slipstream of these political and institutional developments quite a few instruments of measurement and control have been introduced in everyday reality of the UAS's. Performance measurements, strategy-development, integrated management, vertical job differentiation, budgets and audits, alongside HR-instruments like performance appraisals and career planning, a growing number of temporarily assignments, a project-based organization, and the introduction of inspiring visions and corporate values became part of the working reality. In order to improve efficiency and to account for public expenditure a web of control was woven.

This web of control instruments is part of what has become to be known as New Public Management (NPM). NPM is a management-philosophy which from the 1980s accompanies the restructuring of the (semi) public domain (Karp and Helgø, 2008; Lapsley, 2009). The term NPM denotes the introduction of management instruments into the (semi) public sector. Examples include performance measurements, integrated management, vertical job differentiation, budgets and audits. These resources are introduced to improve efficiency and account for public expenditure. Due to this management-philosophy competition - internally among members of staff and externally among rival institutions - is introduced in the (semi) public sector for the greater benefit of clients (students) and stakeholders (government, employers). One of the results is that, to attract clients and to convince stakeholders UAS's started to invest - although criticized - a part of their budget for marketing and public relations.

Ideally throughout the many years the use of a lot of systems and instruments should have brought quite some success, moreover in a measurable way. However, the ongoing public discussions about and dissatisfaction with Higher Education, the paradox of autonomy and control, alongside the stable high position in ranking lists of the UAS's, makes me wonder what is really happening. To recapitulate shortly: it is amazing that we realize some good things (ranking list), but not the things which are demanded for (public and governmental dissatisfaction), although we design (mission, strategy etcetera) our policy in line with what is demanded (accreditation and performances). Different experiences in different positions made me wonder how things are going on in the UAS with regard to designing and implementing policy in connection with the daily reality of educational work. I felt some urge to reflect.

1.2 Rumbling on performativity and research from my advisory position

The relationship between the policy of the UAS itself and the results of policy became debatable for me. Throughout the years I came to doubt the feasibility or practicability of planned reform according to some policy and as regularly accompanied by programmes, assigned budgets, critical success factors and critical performance indicators. I became interested in how things really are happening and whether there are other, more helpful ways of policy-making and realizing. In general I became to sense my work as never ending, 'as whatever I do, there will always be someone who is not satisfied' and I will always have to face the necessity to take yet another step. However, I suppose it will always be a step within a way of thinking and talking which produces the next disappointment. For a while in the UAS we even paid lip service to the motto "Always better". Or to state this experience in a wide-ranging way: it feels as if working under the colours of NPM shortcomings are produced by definition.

This self-production of shortcomings under the colours of NPM is what I now designate as the rumbling on performativity. NPM appears to be a tapeworm which grows but is never satisfied. Moreover, the bigger the worm grows, the more it needs to feed itself. With hindsight I realize that from the beginning of my career I grapple with this creature. At the start of my career I empathized with the work of the French philosopher Lyotard (1924 – 1998), who for me articulated the evolving ascendancy of performativity. Lyotard termed performativity as a clear and cold calculating approach of reality in which the whole responsibility would be transferred to the subject itself and in which every kind of metaphysics or essence would be denied (Lyotard, 1979). According to Lyotard efficiency is the decisive characteristic of performativity. It is not about what one does, but about how much and quick one does. In my experience the most palpable manifestation of performativity became the circle of Plan-Do-Check-Act, Fleming's vicious circle of total quality-management. Fleming's approach of total quality management was introduced as the basics for the quality assurance system in the UAS. In due course I had to learn to design my working life in a SMART-way.

In fairness I want to forestall an idea that what evolves in the UAS is something which only overruns me. I also acknowledge my responsibilities and actions throughout the years. In different positions I was involved in and co-responsible for the introduction of all kinds of policy and diverse instruments. Also my hands are 'dirty'. As a lecturer I was one of the members of staff who advocated many reforms in my own department. Later on being a dean, members of staff pointed out to me how constantly I was talking of and organizing reform. Nowadays being an adviser to the board I notice how usual it is for members of the board to promote reform and how I became positioned as a programme-manager to realize reform.

My hands got 'dirty' although I keep being annoyed by how light-heartedly politicians and managers are discussing the need and supposed ease of reform. Not to mention

that in my job now, I have to manage between ambitions from the top, interests of different parties and my own beliefs and experiences.

To conclude: in a broad and general sense my research is a reflection on my experiences with the policymaking and implementing in the realm of performativity within a UAS. Focus will be on my position as an adviser of the board trying to figure out what kind of work I am doing and what can be learned from my experiences. Point of departure is my particular experience that we realize other things than we plan, apparently we are doing good things and yet at the same time we are criticized for what we are doing. To phrase this otherwise: I am not interested in designing an umpteenth instrumental improvement of developing and implementing policy. I am interested in what happens in the organization I work for when we are busy with 'doing policy'.

As being involved in 'doing policy' and seeing what it brings, I had a hunch that I required a research approach where the researcher is not positioned as looking from the outside, but is positioned as an involved participant in what happens. After all, I was there, the research concerned my 'personal' experiences and the questions which I experienced as worthwhile evolved in my practice.

1.3 Insider research and 'personal' experiences within Organization and Management Studies

When I state 'a reflection on my experiences' I literally mean a reflexive way of doing research. My research departs from my own experiences, by taking my experiences seriously and by trying to understand them. My research is done from a 'personal' perspective.

The possibility of doing research from a 'personal' orientation does not appear out of the blue. The growing interest in research from a 'personal' perspective is embedded in current discussions within the field of OMS. These discussions have to do with the practical value of OMS-research, amongst others for the way organizations can or should be managed (Bartunek and Egri, 2012; Mohrman and Lawler, 2012; Suddaby et al., 2011). On one side there still is a firm belief that with a systematic use of general management instruments the overall results of an organization will improve (Cozijsen, 2004; Kaplan and Norton, 2004). In a recent overview about the most vital ways to develop organizational strategies Vijverberg and Opdenakker (2013) claim that a manager cannot do without strategy if he wants to secure the future. Even more, Vijverberg and Opdenakker are convinced that for successful improvements a deliberate use of many managerial instruments is decisive. On the other side there is very little evidence for the proclaimed overall improvement by using managerial instruments. Recent research underlines that intended strategy has unintended outcomes (Balogun and Johnson, 2005; Groot and Homan, 2012; Homan, 2013; Suominen, 2009). Moreover, Brunsson (1989) found that formal policy has little to do with what actually is carried

out in an organization. Apparently organizational members do something else as that they are believed to do. The difference between what is intended or planned with what really happens even stimulated a doubt whether organizations are manageable (Stacey, 2010; Weggeman, 2003). The discussions within OMS have elicited curiosity towards what really happens within organizations when policy is developed and implemented.

Insider and 'personal' research

Interest in what is happening within organizations has stimulated a growing tradition of insider research which aims to provide "... important knowledge about what organizations are really like, which traditional approaches may not be able to uncover." (Brannick and Coghlan, 2007: 72). A need for close analysis is underlined for instance through organizational auto-ethnographic accounts (Parry and Boyle, 2009). Parry and Boyle state that organizational auto-ethnographic researchers can provide first-hand accounts of taboo topics such as sexual harassment, motherhood at work or highly charged emotional situations in the workplace. In their view an organizational auto-ethnography can connect the micro and daily and mundane aspects of organizational life with broader political and strategic organizational agendas. Organizational auto-ethnography is research from a 'personal' perspective. Maybe research from a 'personal' perspective is representative for the science of organizational muddling through (Lindblom, 1959).

Self-ethnography, insider research, local heuristics...

Alongside insider research and organizational auto-ethnography one can read about self-ethnography (Alvesson, 2003), at-home ethnography (Alvesson, 2009), insider ethnography (O'Reilly, 2009), story-telling (Koch, 1998; Tesselaar and Scheringa, 2008), local heuristics (Thomas, 2012) and 'withness'-thinking (Shotter, 2006). In these different approaches we are reminded of the process-like or dialogical character of human acting (Koch, 1998; Shotter, 2006; Tesselaar and Scheringa, 2008), craftsmanship (Thomas, 2012) and that doing research as a observing participant is worthwhile and potentially revealing (Alvesson, 2003, 2009; Brannick and Coghlan, 2007; O'Reilly, 2009).

In a general sense it is assumed that insider research offers knowledge which cannot be disclosed from the outside. For this assumption several reasons are forwarded. It is proclaimed that organizational realities are constituted by the acting of real persons and not by some abstract disembodied agents (Simpson, 2009). That means that organizational life is to be found with and could be best described by those who 'create it'. In their daily coping with their organizational reality, organizational members gain superior knowledge about what is going on, which no one else can offer (O'Reilly, 2009). At least it is suggested (Sonnaville, 2005) that in doing research from the outside many things remain uncovered, apparently because people prefer not to wash one's dirty linen in front of an external researcher. For instance interviewing organizational members runs the risk of wishful thinking because "in general people have a tendency to present themselves from their best side." (Baarda and Goede, 2011: 224).

Insider research can be seen as phenomenological approach of research (Verschuren, 2009), oriented in a reflexive way on the living present (O'Reilly, 2009). Insider research adds a radically reflexive dimension to organizational studies through connecting the organization, the strategy, the policy and the management ('the otherness') to the complex, living, bodily sense-making and constituting of meaning ('the betweenness') (Cunliffe, 2003). By bringing in the self, the researcher's relation with the 'otherness' becomes reflexive as part of the way organizations are staged in organizational studies (Alvesson et al., 2008).

As argued before my research is undertaken from an insider position because of what I experience as a debatable relation between a usually instrumental approach of policy and the actual results and appreciation. My research is departing from 'personal' experiences. 'Personal' is put between brackets to avoid the suggestion of a self-absorbed (narcissistic) approach of research. Living, sense-making and constituting of meaning is a social process, in which people in their mutual and interdependent interaction constitute social reality. As such my research is connected to a social constructionist approach (Gergen, 1999).

It will become clear that if the sociality of 'personal' experiences is taken seriously within insider research, it will have quite some consequences for how insider research should be done. I became aware of these consequences by learning and experiencing from the way research is done within a complex responsive process-approach (see next paragraph). This approach belongs to the domain of reflexive insider research and offers possibilities to explore and to understand what happens when starting from what is experienced in daily organizational life. In line with Cunliffe (2003) from now on I will designate the combination of research from a 'personal' and reflexive perspective as radically reflexive.

1.4 Radically reflexive: a first introduction to a complex responsive process-approach

The way my research is done, is based on a doctoral programme which from 1995 on was developed at the University of Hertfordshire (UK) (Stacey, 2012b). The founders of the complex responsive process-approach are Ralph Stacey, Doug Griffin and Patricia Shaw.

In 2010 I entered a comparable programme at the Dutch Open University. This programme was set up within the PhD-school of the Management School of the Open University and came to be known as the Complexity Track. Entering this programme meant participating in a so called learning group of 4 PhD-students, two permanent supervisors, a larger group of PhD-students within the Complexity Track and still larger within the PhD-school, and being taught by visiting professors from all over my country and the world.

The research-programme of the Complexity Track is group-based. The learning group of 4 students and 2 supervisors form a research-community in which everyone participates in each other's research. The programme or better: the participants in your learning group invite you to reflect upon and to make sense of your own experiences, to develop some understanding of group dynamics, power relations and role formation in your organization and to apprehend the normality of uncertainty. As a student you are immersed in an iterative cycle of reading, writing, thinking, and reflexivity and rewriting. Reading, writing etcetera is about your own experiences in your own practice. As a student you are challenged to understand and to accept what it is to act into the unknown, into the unpredictability of daily organizational life. I estimate that the learning group met twenty times in 4 years.

To write, to analyse and to reflect upon your narratives

Research in the context of the Complexity Track comes down to writing in a rather elaborated way about what you are experiencing in your work and trying to understand what is happening by reflecting on your experiences. Discussing these reflections within the learning group and confronting it with existing literature adds to your understanding. The research process is practised similar to your daily organizational life in which you act, engage in conversations with other people, read and gather information, get feedback, get angry or happy, negotiate, reflect, gossip, take decisions and keep on being engaged. The research process mirrors the constructional, conversational and rather evolving character of daily organizational life, which at its turn is mirrored in the narratives you write.

Vital to note is that my research did not depart from a clear cut problem, neither from a theoretical or conceptual frame nor does it aim at clear cut generalizable solutions. The important subjects for my research appeared to be 'performativity', 'time for interruption' (see chapter 7) and 'bricoleur' (see 5.5 and chapter 7) and emerged in due course during the research process. I really worked into the unknown, leading to some understanding of my practice. It is quite revealing to learn to understand that you are influencing what is happening in your daily work, that you are part of what is happening, that you experience that you do not and cannot control what is happening and that due to your research you learn to understand what is happening. In learning to understand what is happening in your work, you also learn to understand what it is to do research from a complex responsive process perspective.

Narratives about your experiences are the logical and obvious empirical core for this way of doing research. The daily social and mundane activities are the living experience, are the 'raw material' in which your life comes true. When organizations are interpreted as co-created conversational social realities, as a fluid pattern constituted by rituals, passions, myths, fantasies, gossip, rumours, formal and informal speech, habits and routines (Stacey, 2007) or as polyvocal and fragmented (Homan, 2005) then narratives provide a basis for describing and understanding what is happening.

In a formal way a narrative is to describe as a story in which the narrator makes sense of his experiences related to incidents and events (Boje, 2001; Cunliffe and Coupland, 2012). To be different from a story a narrative presents a plot line, coherence, and actions connected to history and biography. The narrative offers a basis for the evaluation of actions and intentions of the narrator; the narrator might learn from it by making sense of what he or she is doing.

To understand what an organization is, is to understand what we are doing, is to understand ongoing processes of responding to each other. The emphasis on conversation elucidates the dynamics of an organization, and points to the need to use narratives as the basis for analysis and reflection in the research. In my narratives my 'personal' daily experiences are taken as the point of departure for the research. Narratives offer possibilities of contextuality and reflexivity, to express purposes and motives and to be sensitive to temporality (Tsoukas and Hatch, 2012). Narratives can be understood as the ante-narratives (Boje, 2001) of the rather idealized version of tools and facts in literature about planned organizational development, or the ante-narratives of the many spreadsheets which to my idea function as the tarot cards of modern organizations. Narratives inspire to find language for the darkness and obscurity of experience (Bochner, 2001).

An iterative research process: movement of thought

Working into the unknown is multilateral and multidimensional: learning to do research from a complex responsive process-perspective and learning from your experiences, experiencing how interpretations change and evolve during the research process expresses a movement of thought, which is an eye-catching characteristic of this way of doing research.

In this iterative research process themes emerge, your reflection and understanding move. The emergence of themes is an expression of your learning process and the way your thoughts move. These are the themes which bother you in your work and thus themes which are worth researching. 'Catching' this movement of thought is done in the narratives, analyses and the reflections. Practically for me this came down to write – including the analyses and reflections – 4 versions of narrative 1, 6 versions for narrative 2, 4 versions for narratives 3 and 5 for narrative 4. In this thesis the 'final' versions of the narratives are presented, scrutinized with hindsight on relevance, coherence, privacy and discretion. Apart from that, an assessment for being allowed to enter the PhD-school, the defending of a research proposal, being assessed in a semi-viva based on a progression report (4 versions) and intensive discussions with an external co-supervisor are all part of the game. The way people implicated in the narratives are involved regarding what is narrated about them, will be accounted for in the ethical paragraph in chapter 2.

The narratives and their analyses and reflections, are the building blocks of my research, finalized by a synopsis in which I look back and reflect on what emerged as

important issues in my practice, how these issues are socially construed in the interactions among me and my colleagues and what might be learned from these experiences.

The research brought quite some surprising outcomes and originated some insights which may be helpful for others working in more or less the same circumstances. Given its ontological and epistemological assumptions the research has not provided in some general solutions regarding uncovered drawbacks of performativity and policy. My insights are not meant as a set of systematic generalizations to be a next meal for the tapeworm. However, they may be worthwhile in general discussions regarding performativity and educational policy.

1.5 A bird's eye of my research

Three narratives of in total 4 narratives concern activities regarding my work as an adviser to the board. One narrative is about my activities in a project on identity-management (chapter 4), a second narrative is about my involvement with an internal process of developing performance agreements (chapter 5) and a third narrative is about a discussion about the potential of constructive dissent for organizational development (chapter 6).

In the narrative about the project on identity-management I write about a period of 10 weeks in which I was involved in a coordination team. This team had to prepare conclusions for the Executive Board regarding the evaluation of the results of an identity-management programme. In the description, analysis and reflection on this process I learned to understand how conclusions – which will have impact on the policy of the UAS - are moulded in the interactions among those involved. Moreover, I felt provoked to reflect upon my role as adviser within a broad range of role-metaphors varying from a ventriloquist to a corporate jester.

In the narrative about the performance agreements I write about a period of 8 months. During that period I was one of the two project-leaders which were responsible for drawing up the mentioned before performance agreements for the UAS. You would expect that given the potential consequences of the performance agreements, the drawing up of these agreements would have been a well-organized and rather rational undertaking. My narrative, analysis and reflections upon this period of 8 months point to a rather Babylonian and Sisyphean process of internal negotiations, lucky coincidence, differences in power and of strong interdependency among the involved. Again I felt provoked to reflect upon my role as adviser, this time more oriented on aspects of mediating, connecting and linking in a world which has become rather unpredictable.

In the narrative about dissent I write about a period of one and a half year. In this period I was involved in a search for how to think about and how to organize dissent

within the UAS. This search was fuelled by my own research with regard to potentially appointing me as a corporate jester within the UAS, by an announced governmental policy regarding the need of constructive dissent within UAS's and by some evolving thoughts by the members of the Board about stimulating resilience or resistance to prevent derailments within the UAS.

These narratives mirror my experiences, but not in a naive and novel-like way. As mentioned the narratives have evolved throughout a rather rigorous analytical and reflexive process, in which I participated for 4 years. For the way of working within this complex responsive process-approach I will take responsibility in connection with longstanding bodies of thought in which this approach is embedded, and with regard to scientificity and ethical matters (chapter 2). Of course questions are to be answered regarding relevance and internal and external validity of the research. Of course issues are to be dealt with regarding privacy and discretion. In chapter 2 I will also come back to why insider research was indicated to do research.

As mentioned a complex responsive process-approach is a reflexive approach of doing research. Regarding this reflexive approach the researcher is held to take responsibility for the many interpretations and choices he makes regarding his research. By doing that it becomes possible to keep up with the learning process of the researcher (Flyvbjerg, 2001). In general qualitative researchers acknowledge that their texts cannot be separated from the author, from how it is received by readers and what impact they have on the involved of the research (Creswell, 2007). Therefore an exploration of my taken for granted assumptions, which undeniable influenced the 'personal' research within my own practice from the onset, is compulsory. In chapter 3 I present a narrative in which I reconstructed the way I came to think and feel about different topics. Looking back at my socialisation, my education and my working experiences I come to elaborate on how I experience my work, what I think are important problems and how I think, at the moment of writing the narrative, of ways to solve them. Once again this narrative will clarify that I entered my research project with quite a lot of varied ideas about what to do with policy within a UAS. I learned, I interpreted and reconstructed my experiences, and a perspective on what I was doing in the context of my work evolved.

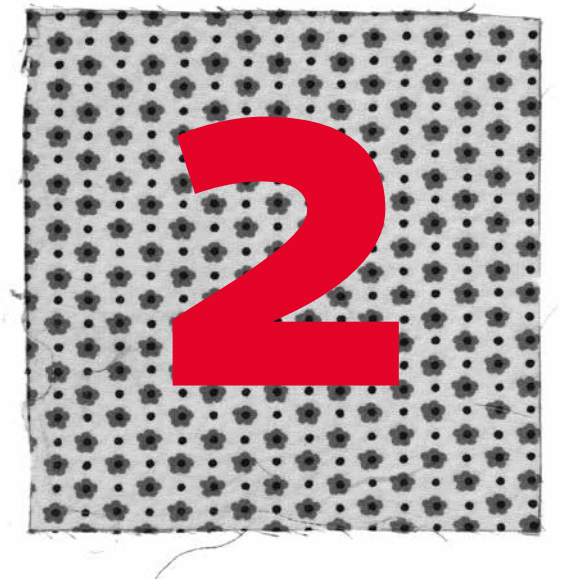
In the final chapter 7 conclusions, results and the contribution of my research to the field of OMS will be discussed. A felt need to interrupt - to rumble on! - somehow the rumbling on performativity expresses the outcomes of my research. In this final chapter I will reflect upon the research undertaken and how interruption and performativity have come to be main subjects of my thesis. To take time for interruption has a double connotation. It indicates the felt necessity for some sort of interruption of our business as usual. 'Time for' also indicates the need to take some time to rumble on performativity.

Given my position as an adviser to the board and due to what emerged as a topic in my research I will also reflect upon the position of (me as) a corporate jester. Without going into detail right here I conclude that a bricoleur, blessed with a good share of irony, appeared to be an apt description of the work I do. A contribution of my research to the field of OMS is a reflection on what advisory work might imply, or more specific what kind of adviser appears to be needed for some sort of rumbling on the rumbling on performativity.

1.6 A send-off

This thesis is a report about the process and substance of my (re)search trying to understand what I experience in my daily organizational life and how I act on this. The narratives - including the analyses and reflections - have been written between 2010 and 2014. They are presented in the version which was agreed to during the research. The narratives are a way exploring my experiences, not to be read as a concluded or completed subject or article.

There are some restrictions. Important to note is that these narratives were read and evaluated in a private, confidential and conversational sphere within the learning group and by the people involved. Wherever I assumed that people personally could be harmed in my narrative I have removed that section. Where I assumed a need to explain something for a reader I have added information, for instance by giving a short introduction on every narrative or the topic, or by introducing short headlines or a short introductory comment to indicate what comes next. At the end of each chapter I reflect on what the specific narrative, analyses and reflections have brought me anticipating the final reflections in the last chapter. Just to be unambiguous: chapters 3, 4 5 and 6 contain an introduction and a reflection in hindsight which as such do not belong to the narrative and the initial analyses and reflections.



Research from a complex responsive process-approach

This chapter is a methodological chapter in which the different aspects of doing research from a complex responsive process-perspective are specified and accounted for. First of all I will go into the basic notions of a complex responsive process-approach, among others by highlighting the different components of its label. The concepts 'complexity', 'responsiveness' and 'process' will pass in review to be explained (see 2.1). The three concepts point to a radically reflexive way of doing research. I will elaborate on what reflexive research implies regarding a complex responsive process-approach (see 2.2). By offering brief excursions to some philosophical and methodological discussions about science I hope to legitimize a complex responsive process-approach in a broader perspective. Building on that I will pay attention to the way relevance and external and internal validity as standards for thorough research, are to be accounted for (see 2.3). For that I will appreciatively make use of discussions which have evolved with regard to auto-ethnography. Auto-ethnography is an approach within the realm of insider research, which on different aspects is comparable with a complex responsive process-approach. A brief excursion to auto-ethnography will underpin the similarities. An assessment of auto-ethnography with regard to a complex responsive process-approach will help me to substantiate for my research (see 2.4). Moreover, auto-ethnography will be of help to deepen ethical issues, which inevitably entail my research due to its radically reflexive character (see 2.5). I will end with a set of criteria and questions which may be used to discuss the quality of my (kind of) research (see 2.6).

2.1 Basic notions of a complex responsive process-approach

I start with emphasizing that a complex responsive process-approach and its key aspects are not a theoretical frame which I adopted preceding my research. At the start I had some affinity with social constructionist and narratively based research and as mentioned, I had doubts about the relevance of management theory related to the planned development, implementation and realization of institutional policy. In the beginning I had to familiarise myself with the way of working within a complex responsive process-approach and its methods for my PhD-research. Narrating, analysing, discussing and reflecting upon my experiences helped me to advance my understanding of what I was doing in the activities and projects in my work. The development of my understanding of a complex responsive process-approach was not a separate activity, detached from my (or someone else's) work. I learned from being involved in the activities in my work and narrating, analysing and reflecting upon them. And I learned that this way of doing research leads to some surprising insights regarding the organizational reality I work in, regarding my position as an adviser to the board and regarding other perspectives upon organizational life within OMS.

To state what I came to understand in a rather abstract way: in due course I understood that in my kind of research ontology and epistemology are indistinguishable. This means that a complex responsive process-approach implies a way of understand-

ding organizational reality as the way organizational reality evolves. "What is required to research organizations ... are methods that are consonant with the continuous processes of mutual adaptation, mutual anticipation and meaning making that occurs when people come together to achieve things." (Mowles, 2011: 85). The way you perceive has consequences for what you see, and what you see has consequences for what will be. Because the methodological implications of not distinguishing between ontology and epistemology have far reaching consequences for the way relevance, the external and internal validity of the research is established, I will come back to when discussing these topics (see 2.3).

Starting from this quite radical point of view and its consequences, my appropriation of a complex responsive process-approach is a logical part of the research-process and is described as such in the chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6. I simultaneously reflect on subjects being researched and the way of doing this kind of research as such. Moreover, if what one knows is connected to how one knows, reflecting upon 'the how' should be an ethical obligation for a researcher because every epistemological perspective is connected to a specific set of knowledge claims (Verschuren, 2009), therefore bound to a specific way of interpreting (social) reality, the position and responsibility of the researcher, and the purpose, value and consequences of the research. For instance when it is claimed that research brings forth objective knowledge it should go without saying that a researcher accounts for the consequences of this claim. One cannot deny that there are strong, almost organic connections between 'what is' and 'what ought'.

In line with this ethical obligation I endorse that methods should be "...forged around questions; the methods ... (should be) the servants not the executive directors. It is the questions that are important." (Thomas, 2012: 38). Methods as such should not be the predominant factor in research. In this context Verschuren (2009) pleads for a methodological relativism. According to Verschuren problems should be leading for which research method to choose instead of the (unconscious) preferences or the convenient routines of the researcher and his research community.

Key aspects of a complex responsive process-approach

The key aspects of a complex responsive process-approach are recapitulated by Stacey and Griffin (2005). Within a complex responsive process-approach an organization is thought as "... an evolving pattern of interaction between people that emerges in the local interaction of those people, with its fundamental aspects of communication, power and ideology, and evaluative choices." (Stacey and Griffin, 2005: 19). An organization is not to be interpreted as a thing – a system, a structure, an object - which exists independent from its members. The organization as an evolving and social pattern exists because of the ongoing interactions of people involved, construing and thereby establishing and sharing a mutual understanding of what they are doing to what purposes. Thus an organization is approached as a conversational phenomenon, which emerges as a pattern and is produced and sustained in local communicative interactions. As such what happens is uncertain and unpredictable, due to the ongoing

interactions and their constructive impact. An organization is approached as a temporarily social construction.

The conversational interactions, in which an organization is established, should not be idealized according to some sort of utopian norm. In the interactions negotiations about what is real are constantly going on. These interactions are loaded with power differences. Due to the interdependency of the persons involved, mutual relations fluctuate all the time. Thus the interactions are neither interpreted as one-sided or top-down affairs nor as an idealized communicative process. Point of departure is the working of the micro-politics of power (Foucault, 1976) incorporated in the mutual gestures (Mead, 1934) of the persons involved. In the fluctuating and interdependent interactions emerges what sort of organizational reality is accepted for the time being.

However, the temporality of the organizational reality is not to be interpreted as if every day this reality is built up from scratch. Within a complex responsive process-approach one speaks of transformative causality (Stacey, 2010; Stacey and Griffin, 2005) to catch the idea of continuity and temporality at the same time. Basically the idea is that the past is not present in the present in a deterministic way, but as the point of departure for the present. As point of departure the past has caused the present - human beings are historically and socially entrenched - but due to the ongoing interactions different pasts emerge every day. Within a complex responsive process-approach it is argued that in the living present the existing social reality is constantly sustained and transformed.

The foundational concepts in a nutshell: complexity, responsiveness and process

To my idea transformative causality can be taken as a suitable expression of the confluence of concepts which are foundational for a complex responsive process-approach. The foundational concepts of a complex responsive process-approach originated predominantly from complexity sciences (Prigogine, 1996; Prigogine and Stengers, 1988), figurational sociology (Elias, 1969, 1970) and interactionist psychology from a pragmatist's point of view (Mead, 1932, 1934). I give a short introduction of the concepts, in the coming chapters these concepts will help to develop some understanding about what is happening in organizational life.

Complexity

In the 1970s and 1980s according to Stacey (2007) complexity sciences started to influence discussions in the natural sciences by introducing concepts as chaos, dissipative structures, strange attractors and non-linearity. Instead of a predictable, stable and mechanical picture of nature a picture of perpetual change, unpredictability, self-organization, emergence and diversity was painted. A basic contention is that, although initial conditions may be known, to predict how things will evolve is not possible. The flaws in weather forecasts are a useful illustration of the unpredictability. Due to tiny variations in the initial conditions unpredictable patterns evolve in the long run, which cannot be reduced to what preceded them. A process is irreversible. The notion

that the little wing-beat of a butterfly in Brazil can cause a hurricane in Texas vulgarized these new sciences for a broad audience (Hijmans, 1990).

In due course insights from the complexity sciences were transferred to the domain of OMS. One might speak of a complexity turn (Johannessen, 2009). A widely known transfer of insights from the complexity sciences is a complex adaptive system-approach. A complex responsive process-approach is another perspective which evolved. Within both perspectives an organization is approached an emerging pattern; the biggest difference is the assumed manageability of an organization. A complex responsive process-approach departs from radical unpredictability, due to the unpredictable behaviour of human beings. A complex adaptive system-approach departs from an interventionist perspective on organizations, assuming that human behaviour is somehow to be influenced to generate efficient social patterns. A Dutch representative of a complex adaptive approach is Zuijderhoudt (2007), according to Van Ginneken (1999) a pioneer to introduce a complexity approach in the domain of OMS in the Netherlands. Recently Groot (2010b) introduced a complex responsive process-approach in the Netherlands.

Responsiveness and process

Although from an era in which complexity was not yet a subject within social sciences, within a complex responsive process-approach the notion of unpredictability of human behaviour is taken up from the work of Mead and Elias. In the work of the social psychologist Mead responsiveness is central. In what Mead (1934) calls the conversation of gestures, he clarifies that social processes are constituted by an ongoing exchange of gestures and responses, in which it is even impossible to make a difference between a gesture and a response. What I do (gesture in a response to someone or something) is interpreted by someone else to what he or she reacts (response and gesture). In this interpretative process of gestures and responses a social reality emerges, building up to general social patterns. However, these general patterns – called social objects by Mead (1938) – are not some things which exists on themselves. The continuity of social patterns is realized in a continuous functionalizing and particularizing in the many social interactions in daily life. When the UAS is approached as a social pattern regarding Higher Education, this pattern exists in the many ways it is sustained and it evolves in daily organizational life. It exists in what the persons involved actually are making of it.

However, one must realize that what the persons involved are making of it, is not a matter of rational and deliberate design. Although persons involved may qualify their behaviour as rational and deliberate, one could say that the social emerges 'behind the back' of the involved. For this perspective on social processes the work of Elias is founding within a complex responsive process-approach. In his history of western civilization Elias (1969) exemplifies that what we call civilized behaviour nowadays, is not the consequence of a deliberate choice regarding our behaviour. In the West according to Elias our present day civilized behaviour is moulded in the historical

process of the constitution of nations and states. Because from the Middle Ages the monopoly on violence was appropriated by the national state, people developed new ways of protecting their interests. The emerged civilized behaviour is provoked by growing interdependence and characterized by social morals of self-restraint, moderateness and non-physical ways of self-protection. In this behaviour the micro-politics of power are played out.

Elias underlines two developments. First are the unforeseen outcomes of historical developments. Second is that the way we behave has changed. The first outcome points to the absence of a deliberate design or rational planning of social processes or society. Second the outcome points to the importance of conversation which has become the pre-eminent way of managing our affairs, the art of peaceful fighting (Achterhuis and Koning, 2014).

The three foundational concepts together underpin a complex responsive process-approach in its approach of organizational reality as conversational processes of interdependent persons. However, not only as a conversational process, but also as a social process which evolves in an unpredictable way out of which new developments emerge.

A complex responsive process-approach and reflexivity

The foundational concepts of a complex responsive process-approach point to a reflexive way of doing research. If it is contended that neither choice nor planning is decisive and responsiveness and interdependency are typical, then trying to understand what is happening in organizational life is trying to understand something ever-changing. After all, in a dynamical understanding of social reality, understanding is a matter of responding and not an isolated act of an observer at a distance. In order to try to understand what is happening, a reflexive stance seems to be more appropriate. Because of the 'personal' basis of the research a radically reflexive stance is needed.

Reflexive research and by that a complex responsive process-approach express a commotion within scientific and philosophical communities, and in extension within OMS. The amount of proclaimed turns - paradigm shifts (Kuhn, 1962) - within social sciences is an indication for the amount of this commotion within the international scientific community. Apparently humanistic, feministic and post-structuralistic (Denzin, 1992), rhetorical and critical (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994), linguistic (Deetz, 1992), discursive (Grant et al., 2009), historic (Abma, 2011), complexity (Johannessen, 2009), reflexive (Etherington, 2004), micro-social (Brinkmann, 2012) and practice (Nicolini, 2013) turns are challenging the existing paradigms within the social sciences. As far as a complex responsive process-approach differs from seminal research within the social sciences, I approach this perspective as constituted by and co-constituent for the discussions about science as indicated by the different turns. A complex responsive process-approach is embedded in the discussions within social sciences, more

specific embedded in discussions regarding reflexive, practice-oriented, and critical and complexity perspectives on research. From a complex responsive process-perspective reflexivity in research is an important and distinctive feature.

Taking reflexivity as a point of departure for research is not without consequences. Within social sciences reflexive research represents a breach with modernistic scientific presumptions of objective observation, and planning and control. These are presumptions which are derived from the natural sciences (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2009). To gain some idea about the profundity of this breach I present excursions about the backgrounds this breach, more specific about the so called reflexive, practice, critical and complexity turns.

Textbox 2: A reflexive turn

From the 1970s a strong criticism evolved on the techno-rational, scientific and consumptive invasion and domination of people's life-world. A strong perception was that people's life became more and more designed according to the rules and interests of big commercial companies, health organizations and by governmental interference. Intertwined with this domination Eurocentric and masculine hegemony also became discussed. With hindsight one can say that to cope with post-war effects of modernization, social scientists started to reflect upon or maybe even attempted to rescue people's life-world (Deetz, 1992). Generally speaking these rescue attempts can be qualified as the renaissance of the particular or local (Toulmin, 1990) or a micro-social turn (Brinkmann, 2012). Scientists articulated resistance against the colonization of the life-world (Habermas, 1981a, b), the rise of the surveillance-state (Foucault, 1975), alongside a plea for the beauty of small-scale economy (Schumacher, 1973). Post-war modernization was disclosed in its insalubrious consequences in daily life.

The reflexive turn articulates a search in social sciences for an alternate language to express and to understand what is experienced in life. Reflexive research is against the grain of research which pretends to be objective or value-free, as if the researcher (or the interests he represents) would have no influence on what is researched and how. As if there is no researcher at all. From a reflexive point of view this seeming independency of the researcher is criticized. "The more one tries to remove or to curtail the voice of the author, the more authorial he or she becomes in determining how something is portrayed, and the more dishonest the inevitable representation of the 'other'." (O'Reilly, 2009: 172). From a reflexive point of view by recognizing the unavoidability of personal bias "... our everyday lives are a unique context for discovering who we are and what is at stake in human living in the twenty-first century." (Brinkmann, 2012: 4).

The reflexive turn can be interpreted as a very broad perspective on a wide range of discussions on what should be done different in social sciences. For Alvesson & Sköldbberg (2009) reflexive methodologies include approaches

varying from social constructionism, critical realism, grounded theory, hermeneutics, critical theory, post structuralism, postmodernism up till discourse analysis, feminism and genealogy. Common is that reflexive research should enable to express what really would matter or matters for people, about their daily worries and felt pressure, and about how people can be helped to cope with (potential) inequality, exclusion, alienation and repression. Research being reflexive intends to give voice to the local against the boasting broadcasting of post-war modernity.

Textbox 3: A practice turn

From the 1950s a recurring theme - which came to be labelled as the practice turn - within OMS is that research is of little consequence for management practice in everyday (Aldag, 2012; Bansal et al., 2012; Bartunek and Egri, 2012; Ireland, 2012; Mohrman and Lawler, 2012; Pearce and Huang, 2012; Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2011; Simpson, 2009; Suddaby et al., 2011; Walsh, 2011). Questions are asked how to augment the relevance of research for practice. Accessible writing is suggested (Bansal et al., 2012; Pearce and Huang, 2012; Walsh, 2011) next to effective communication about results (Stewart and Barrick, 2012). Or research should be done near the practice (Aldag, 2012; Pearce and Huang, 2012) as "...organizational researchers must ask questions with organizational practioners, not about them." (Mohrman and Lawler, 2012: 45; italics authors). From a radical perspective there is doubt about the usefulness of research. "People do not need social scientists to pick their way through the organizational world. They already have methodic ways of doing this." (Llewellyn and Hindmarsh, 2010: xii).

Within OMS a tradition of practice-based research evolved as a response to the recurring lack of practicality of conventional research. A tradition with its roots in the concept of phronesis of Aristotle (384 - 322 B.C.), in the critical work of Marx (1818 - 1883), in the philosophy of language of Wittgenstein (1889 - 1951), in the phenomenology of Heidegger (1889 - 1976), in the existentialism of Sartre (1905 - 1980) and in the American pragmatism and symbolic interactionism (Nicolini, 2013; Simpson, 2009). Practice-based research is a return to being-in-the-world as the ontological point of departure for research; to do research into what occurs in practice instead of developing or testing a hypothetical model.

According to Nicolini (2013) OMS-practice-based research is oriented on the activities within organizations. The focus is on activities - what is done - instead on the individual acting of actors. Activities are approached as expressions of providing meaning, identity and order in situations, focussed on the accomplishments of actors. Activities are considered within their immediate backgrounds as social, discursive and bodily appearances in which habits, interests, power and artefacts emerge. An organization is approached as a dynamical and ongoing (re)produced relational network.

Reputable practice-based research is ethno-methodology (Llewellyn and Hindmarsh, 2010; Nicolini, 2013; Simpson, 2009). This kind of research situates itself in local practices, taking the everyday and habitual acting of people as real. "Enacted local practices are not texts which symbolize "meanings" or events. They are in detail identical with themselves, and not representative of something else. The witnessably recurrent details of ordinary everyday practices are constituent of their own reality." (Garfinkel, 2002: 97). To understand practices, ethno-methodological researchers try to establish access to the different practices they research, sometimes by preceding their research by education in law, mathematics or music, or by obtaining a licence for driving a truck (Rawls, 2002). They need to become competent members of the researched practice (Coulon, 1995; Nicolini, 2013), with an assignment "... to show how the participants themselves orient to these features (of the practice) in and through their conduct." (Llewellyn and Hindmarsh, 2010: 31). Basic for ethno-methodology is to study the methods through which people produce order in their daily life (Coulon, 1995; Garfinkel, 2002; Rawls, 2002).

Textbox 4: A critical turn

Apparently it is generally accepted that the publication of "Critical Management Studies" in 1992 (edited by Alvesson and Willmott, 1992) launched Critical Management Studies (CMS) as a body of thought. CMS became a brand under which research became synthesized which opposed to the dominating technocratic management research (Kaulingfreks et al., 2004; Parker, 2005). CMS-research is dominantly inspired by the philosophical traditions of Critical Theory or the Frankfurter Schule.

From the perspective of CMS human efforts are no longer aimed at realizing substance, practical viability and quality. Instead meaningful efforts are said to have become overruled by a policy of keeping up the appearances as promoted by processes of branding and certification (Alvesson, 2013). This critical stance towards our society fits in the tradition of CMS in which scientism, one-dimensionality, consumerism, technocracy and distorted communication are seen as tokens for the loss of the standards of the Enlightenment (Alvesson and Willmott, 2012; Scherer, 2009). People's life world has been colonized by economic and scientific designs of a good life.

CMS claims guardianship of emancipation on behalf of the wellbeing of employees, consumers and citizens. Emancipation will be realized if decision-making processes take direct account of the will and priorities of diverse stakeholders instead of only the financial and managerial priorities of the elite. Emancipatory transformation should promote greater autonomy and responsibility through which human interdependence instead of individualism can be realized (Alvesson and Willmott, 2012).

To contribute to emancipatory transformation the research programme of CMS emphasizes a critical analysis of management practices. A research agenda is conceived to develop a non-objective view of management techniques and organizational processes, to expose asymmetrical power relations, to counteract discursive closure, revealing the partiality of shared interests and to appreciate the centrality of language and communicative action (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992). Three main subjects catch the eye: the central importance of language and communication, the role of power and ideology, and an emancipatory intention towards those whose lives are directly affected by the activities and ideologies of management.

CMS connects itself to scientific practices which aim at disruption of existing social practices and providing impulses for liberation from or resistance to constraints in decision making (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000). Three distinguishing characteristics of CMS become acknowledged: de-naturalization, anti-performativity and reflexivity (Alvesson et al., 2009a; Grey and Willmott, 2005; Parker, 2005). 'De-naturalization' implies a critical stance against what is presented and/or taken for granted as being the natural order of things. Criticizing the difference in payment of managers and employees as if this difference is an unavoidable outcome of a difference in the burden of responsibilities, clarifies what is meant by de-naturalization. 'Anti-performativity' is connected to a criticism of the dominance of instrumental reasoning, as if human actions should and could be managed from a means-ends perspective. Ethical and political issues are at stake, although often embezzled in a functionalist approach of for instance corporate identity programmes (Thomas, 2009). 'Reflexivity' or reflexive CMS is to recognize that no organizational or managerial practice is neutral or universal but that always values are implied which guide so called facts and representations. Interrogating assumptions and routines is mandatory.

Given the wide range of CMS research from a critical analysis of Human Resource Management-techniques like self-management (Barker, 2005) and performance appraisal (Townley, 2005), to accounting and operational research (Alvesson and Willmott, 2012; Mingers, 1992; Power and Laughlin, 1992) one can speak of a critical turn within OMS.

Textbox 5: A complexity turn?

At the risk of a self-referential legitimating of a complex responsive process-approach - a complexity turn to legitimate an approach which relies on complexity sciences - I sketch some of the backgrounds of why the interest within social sciences or OMS for a complexity perspective is growing. Given the rather recent character of this growing interest to introduce complexity in social sciences (KNAW, 2011) it remains to be seen if one can speak of a complexity turn. For instance it took Zuijderhoudt (2007) twenty years to develop the concept of synergy, through which as a consultant he was able to understand and stimulate a surplus of efficiency, which emerges out of organizational bifurcations.

Matthews et al. (2012) suggest five reasons for the incorporation of complexity theory into OMS. First they draw attention to the increasing rates of social change. These rates of change produce quite some uncertainty, amongst others for managers. While even the rules of the game change due to unexpected events, complexity sciences might help to understand what is happening. Secondly they point to the acknowledgement that social reality is dynamic and non-linear (see for instance: KNAW, 2011) and that to understand this reality a process perspective is needed, through which – thirdly – social behaviour, because of its unpredictability, can be understood. A fourth argument – as mentioned earlier with regard to OMS – the practical results of OMS are disappointing up to now and an approach in which temporality, change or transformation is understood may produce insights in what really is happening within organizations. A fifth argument is that a complexity approach offers possibilities to leave behind a mechanistic, Newtonian perspective in which reality is reduced to a well-defined and predictable whole of connected and stable elements. This still is a dominant perspective that would relate poorly to the actual societal dynamics. A sixth reason why complexity has caught interest is articulated by Abma (2011) and Johannessen (2009). Both point to the central importance of emergence or self-organization in which irreversibility and novelty can be explained, without falling back on reductionist and control-oriented approaches. In social sciences there are omens for the insurgence of social instead of individualistic or bio-medical approaches of human behaviour (Brinkgreve, 2014). Whatever complexity might bring, it cannot offer an individualistic perspective on human behaviour.

With regard to the field of OMS Johannessen (2009) points to deficit of much of the management literature which has proven to be of little practical relevance. A deficit which is underlined in much of the research on change management of Homan (2005). Homan introduces complexity in OMS as an approach to clarify why most of the planned organizational changes fail and he develops some ideas how change evolves in the polyvocal orchestra an organization is.

The different turns point to very different perspectives on social sciences, but there are quite some themes which they appear to have in common. The importance of language, the workings of power, the focus on life-world and practice, the unpredictability of human behaviour, the criticizing of objectivity of science and the relativity of view-points are shared. I conclude that within these turns a growing interest is to be noticed towards the local, the specific or the subjective in a contrast with the general and objective orientations from a positivistic stance. This contrast exemplifies the breach between a reflexive and a modernistic approach of science. Reflexive research collapses "... an entire array of binary oppositions that have traditionally given "method" its meaning in academia ... fact/fiction, subjective/objective, art/science, reason/emotion." (Frentz, 2008: 23).

In line with the basic contention that our social reality is ever-changing due to the unpredictable outcomes of human behaviour, reflexive research is an obvious approach for doing research. To repeat myself: trying to understand what is happening in

organizational life is trying to understand something ever-changing. Reflexive research is as if catching water with your hand. To catch, an enhanced attention is demanded. Given the elusiveness of social reality reflexive research has its own demands.

The breach within the reflexive, practice-based, critical and (potentially) complexity turns with positivistic approaches of science is quite fundamental. Therefore it remains to be seen if reflexive research is easily to be positioned within a comparison of different research-methods as done by Verschuren (2009). I will come back to that when discussing the subjects of relevance and internal/external validity of research (see 2.3).

In the next paragraph I will indicate what it implies to be a reflexive researcher and to do reflexive research, taking the breach with modernistic or positivistic approaches of science as point of departure. Given the "personal" line of approach within my research I will return to why a complex responsive process-approach is to be interpreted as a radically reflexive approach of research. After that I will pay attention to auto-ethnographic research, trying to learn something from this research tradition.

2.2 Reflexive research(er) and a complex responsive process-approach

Reflexivity is an umbrella concept. Reflexivity embraces a wide range of approaches for research. Already mentioned are the influence of the philosophy of Aristotle, Marx, Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Sartre, American pragmatism and symbolic interactionism. These philosophies are, together with for instance the work of Foucault and of the philosophers within the tradition of the Frankfurter Schule, to be found in reflexive research from the perspective of social constructionism, critical realism, grounded theory, hermeneutics, critical theory, post structuralism, postmodernism, discourse analysis, feminism and genealogy. These are approaches in which the position of the research and of the researcher are held up to the light, in which specific interests connected to power differences are paid attention to, and in which the very substance of scientific research is debated.

The renaissance of the particular and local (Brinkmann, 2012; Toulmin, 1990) has far-reaching consequences for the self-image of researchers. There should be a growing awareness that there exists an intimate relation between power and scientific truths (Foucault, 1980). It is contended that a researcher's values and beliefs lay behind every interpretation, that research as everything is a construction in time (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Etherington, 2004; O'Reilly, 2005) permeated by amongst others politics, conventions, selective perception and language (Alvesson et al., 2008; Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2009). Even in the apparently value-free realm of computer-languages (Baron, 1986). In contemporary ethnographic fieldwork reflexivity is required to think critically about the context of research and writing, thinking about what is read and

written and to acknowledge that the researcher is part of the world which is studied (O'Reilly, 2009).

The plurality of the researcher

Reflexivity demands reflections of the researcher about his or her values and beliefs. Reflexivity accounts for one's bias, instead of curtailing one's voice (O'Reilly, 2009). According to Creswell (2007) it is up to the researcher whether or not to actively incorporate his beliefs and conventions in his research. However, in my view values and beliefs are indissoluble from who you are as a person/researcher. It is impossible to undertake any research as if there is a researcher apart from a person's values and beliefs. Values and beliefs are unavoidably present in the research. Denying their presence is not indicated, rather a critical or reflexive stance regarding the impact of their presence in the research is indicated.

Reflexivity concerns me having experiences – not exhaustive – as a parent, a friend, a spouse, a male, a neighbour, a grown up, a colleague, a boss, a subordinate, a citizen, a voter, a tourist, an amateur photographer, a reader, an intellectual, a student, a son, a brother, a nephew, an uncle, a grandfather, a driver, a cyclist, a consumer, a body, being white, of a certain age, being Dutch and European, a president of a foundation, a director, an adviser, a brother in law, a layman musician, a television and a movie-watcher. In reality 'I' am/are a multiple being which in some way is involved in my research. It is an illusion to be able to be fully aware of how all these experiences influence my research. Reflexivity might help. Intellectually I can acknowledge my idiosyncrasy but not dodge it.

Reflexivity then is about trying to become aware of this plural me and about being aware of the unavoidability of this plurality. Reflexivity is an enhanced attention for what we are doing in our research and how this is intertwined with our interpretations, decisions and actions we take regarding our research (Etherington, 2004). Reflexivity enables transparency about what is known and how it is known, it is an ongoing attempt to be explicit about your pre-understandings and de-familiarize your situation (Brinkmann, 2012).

Reflexivity and becoming

In a general sense reflexivity should bring to mind how amongst others coincidence, discontinuity and power bring forth social order (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009). In this perspective social order is not a pre-given structure but is a temporarily situation, a mobile situational and dialogical event among people in which social reality is formed by emphasizing some and suppressing other subjects (Deetz, 1996), with as a consequence that situations are never identical. To be reflexive Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009) speak of playing off different levels of interpretation. By being reflexive the way the empirical material is approached and interpreted and presented, becomes allocated in an ideological context.

Ontologically reflexive research is to be approached as research in which dissensus, orientation on local and emergent processes are points of departure through which conflicts, lost or marginalized voices, ambivalence and diversity are made visible or audible (Deetz, 1996). This research represents a style of thought which is focussed on becoming instead of being, on relating instead of positioning and on organizing instead of organization (Chia, 1995).

In this reflexive process themes emerge and are scrutinized, leading to making sense of experiences which can be of interest for the researcher and others. This sense-making may result in a powerful example (Flyvbjerg, 2001), through which a nuanced view on occurrences within a practice becomes visible. It is the move towards exemplary knowledge of abduction or phronesis through which understanding a problem in its context becomes possible (Thomas, 2010).

In this reflexivity the researcher takes responsibility for the many interpretations and choices he made, through which interpretations of what could have been and can be become possible. Explicitly describing the reflections during the research process makes it possible to keep up with the learning process of the researcher and to make transparent how changes in understandings evolves in research practices over time (Flyvbjerg, 2001). In general qualitative researchers acknowledge that their texts cannot be separated from the author, from how it is received by readers and what impact they have on the involved of the research (Creswell, 2007).

To conclude: reflexivity as point of departure has radical consequences for the position of the researcher. From a radically dynamical and process-oriented approach of organizational reality, an outside position of the researcher is disclaimed. Within a radical approach only an insider's position is possible, a position in which the researcher participates and observes, and which enables him to reflect upon his experiences and in the end to share them. And it is adamant for a researcher to be as much as possible explicit about his values and beliefs, and to describe the analyses and reflections made during the research-process.

A radically reflexive complex responsive process-approach

It sounds almost superfluous to state that researchers which profess a complex responsive process-approach for their research subscribe to a radically reflexive approach. If research is done while participating in the living present of organizational life, it appears to be inevitable to take a reflexive stance. For Shaw (2002) reflexivity indeed is an enhanced attention for what we are doing in our research and how this is intertwined with our interpretations, decisions and actions we take. Reflexivity is about opening up the way reality is represented by you as the researcher and then to relate it critically to traditions of thought in society (Stacey, 2010). In line with what was stated about reflexivity Stacey (2010) argues that reflexivity should connect you to the history of your behaviour and destabilize and disrupt the self-evident sufficiency of your taken for granted interpretations (Stacey, 2012b). Know thyself! Or at least reflexively

try to. Instead of excluding the values and beliefs of the researcher, it is a premise that only by acknowledging the discriminations you make based on your values and beliefs, a sensible conversation about a situation is possible (Dalal, 2012).

However, the conclusion that a radically reflexive complex responsive process-approach is embedded in different, long standing but critical traditions regarding research within OMS, still begs the question whether this kind of research can be assessed as sound research. In a traditional sense sound research has to do with the question how relevance and internal and external validity of the research is taken responsibility for. It is this question which also should be answered by researchers working from a complex responsive process perspective.

If I take two recent publications (Mowles, 2011; Stacey, 2012b) within the tradition of a complex responsive process-approach as a touchstone, I wonder why there is no or little discussion about the radically reflexive perspective in doing research. The reflexive perspective is legitimized within the boundaries of the own tradition of a complex responsive process-approach. Almost no discussions about the radically reflexive point of departure for research with the broader methodological community can be found. To me it appears to be obvious to reflect upon the taken for granted assumptions of radical reflexivity.

This lack of discussions unintentionally suggests that a complex responsive process-approach is unique and maybe even suffers from self-complacency. However, uniqueness would contradict the existence of a complex responsive process-approach because precisely from a complexity perspective we learn to see reality as an evolving pattern. Self-complacency would contradict the importance which within a complex responsive process-approach is assigned to the responsiveness of social interaction.

Given the assumptions within a complex responsive process-approach a connection with broader methodological issues should be made (see for a first elaborated attempt Homan, 2014), to learn and to understand what you are doing in doing research from a radically reflexive perspective as evolving from a complex responsive process-approach. Learning is a matter of interdependency (Stacey, 2003) and if a complex responsive process-approach is to be taken seriously by the larger scientific community a position within that community should be argued.

To develop arguments to position a complex responsive process-approach within a larger scientific community once again I present a next excursion, this time to introduce auto-ethnography as an expression of radically reflexive research. The soundness of auto-ethnographic research is heavily debated, but this debate will help to clarify some issues around a complex responsive process-approach. The debates around auto-ethnography enable me to develop a set of criteria and questions which may be used to discuss the quality of my research.

Auto-ethnography

Auto-ethnography is already a longstanding tradition – the term was coined in 1979 – in which research from a reflexive and rather 'personal' perspective is done and in due course is being legitimized within the broader scientific community. Auto-ethnography is a rather eclectic research praxis (Learmonth and Humphreys, 2012). I will elaborate on what auto-ethnography is about and stipulate some differences within this approach. With this introduction of auto-ethnography I also intend to introduce auto-ethnography in the Dutch scientific community, which to my knowledge, for a larger part is unfamiliar with this way of doing research.

Textbox 6: An excursion on auto-ethnography

Given the amount of recently published overviews of auto-ethnographic research (Boylorn and Orbe, 2014a; Chang et al., 2013; Denzin, 2014; Holman Jones et al., 2013a) auto-ethnography is really coming of age.

Auto-ethnography is radically reflexive. Reflexive narratives are written about for instance the experience of abortion, mourning, depression, divorce, racism, finding oneself in a minority position, cultural and gender identities, and the whereabouts of working in public relations or science, or of being subjected to crime and healthcare. As an example I recapitulate a narrative about the way a recently appointed member of staff of a university was excluded by his colleagues.

"They didn't need to know him; they just disliked him. His different views of the subject, his brash dismissal of long-standing departmental texts, his absence at staff evening "bonding" sessions, his challenging of time-honored pedagogical practices, his keeping himself to himself, his refusal to wear the standard issue shirt, his outsider-ness." (Jones, 2011: 631) is the introduction on a narrative in which the author makes transparent why a recently appointed member of staff resigns. After being criticized and isolated in meetings, in being ignored in the canteen and being judged as a danger to established hegemony this member of staff resigns from one day to the next. According to the author this exclusion is not to be reduced to the acts of one person, the management or some specific causes. This exclusion evolves in a process of weeks in which some colleagues criticize or ignore the member of staff and in which some ignore the possibility to support their colleague. The auto-ethnographic narrative is a description from within of a micro-political process which has a not-managed but apparently desired outcome. At various moments the author wonders about her own contributions to this process of exclusion and what she might or needed to have done to stop this process. "Exclusion" appears to be something which is enacted and not an abstract social mechanism.

This narrative exemplifies that auto-ethnography is radical because it turns the reflexive act upon the researcher self to deconstruct his or her constructions of reality (Cunliffe, 2003). Researchers who identify themselves with auto-ethno-

graphy try to speak about what is silenced and absent, about what is squashed in conventional research and emphasize that research is impacted by race, class, sexuality and gender identities (Holman Jones et al., 2013b). Far from intending to emphasize an individualistic perspective, auto-ethnography is about power, culture and politics. "The irony of self-narratives is that they are of self but not self alone." (Chang, 2008: 33).

Sheer semantically auto-ethnography is about to understand cultural experience (ethno) by describing and analysing (graphy) personal experience (auto) (Ellis et al., 2011). If I pass over the infinite regressive inference in the next quote, auto-ethnography is research " ... that enables researchers to use data from their own life stories as situated in sociocultural contexts in order to gain understanding of society through the unique lens of self." (Chang et al., 2013: 18). Narratives are widely used for this research. In these auto-ethnographic narratives the self and society become connected in an evocative and academic way, acknowledging that aesthetic, cognitive, emotional and relational aspects are involved in the engagement with the research (Anderson and Glass-Coffin, 2013). Difference can be made between an evocative, an interpretive, a critical and an analytical auto-ethnographic accentuation (Anderson and Glass-Coffin, 2013; Chang et al., 2013). These accentuations vary from impressionistic, emotionally engaging and introspective accounts, towards rewriting and reinterpretation of personal life(s) and deconstruction of one's own societal allocation through discourses, and interpreting personal life(s) in relation with existing concepts and theories.

The radically reflexive character of auto-ethnography can be observed in the premises auto-ethnographic research departs from (Anderson and Glass-Coffin, 2013; Mingé, 2013; Tomasselli et al., 2013). Auto-ethnographic researchers postulate that:

- 1 Our realities and knowledges are messy, complex and multiple;
- 2 These knowledges are our constructions from a particular point of view within a particular context, therefore reflexivity is paramount and vulnerability unquestionable;
- 3 Our experience of the world is sensory so our discourses should be sensory, what we do is basic;
- 4 The construction of knowledge is rooted in local contexts and (inter)actions;
- 5 Every day we enact, change and create knowledge through mindful action with impact on other people, engagement and multivocality are imperative;
- 6 To expand knowledge is to expand research methods is to expand ourselves, final conclusions are rejected.

The premises of auto-ethnography point to an anti-foundational or post-modernistic orientation on science. Within this perspective amongst others the discursive power of language, the fragmentation of identities, a critique on the representationalism of positivistic sciences, the loss in the belief in grand narratives or general foundations and the acknowledgement of an inherent connection between power and scientific truth - and thus provoking resistance to truths claims - are emphasized (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000).

In its diversity auto-ethnography aims at change, transformation, liberation, breaking taboos, politicizing, personal change and theory-development (Alexander, 2013; Allen-Collinson, 2013; Anderson, 2006a; Anderson and Glass-Coffin, 2013; Bartleet, 2013; Boylorn and Orbe, 2014a; Chang, 2013; Chang et al., 2013; Denzin, 2013; Douglas and Carless, 2013; Holman Jones et al., 2013b; Quicke, 2010; Tedlock, 2013). Auto-ethnography is an attempt of re-enchantment of the world (Brinkmann, 2012) against the ongoing processes of rationalisation. Although individual and narrative auto-ethnographic research is dominant within auto-ethnography, different approaches have been developed. Collaborative auto-ethnography engages multiple authors and perspectives around a subject, leading to interpersonal reflexive layers in the research (Chang, 2013; Chang et al., 2013). Artful and embodied methods of inquiry, using music, dance, film and performances, have also been developed as auto-ethnographic options (Bartleet, 2013).

Viable and valuable (analytical) auto-ethnography

Especially for a comparison with a complex responsive process-approach it is interesting to learn about an analytical auto-ethnographic line of approach. Anderson (2006a) formulates five key features for a viable and valuable auto-ethnography. These features implicate that the researcher should:

- 1 Be a complete member in the social world under study, being aware that he experiences a role duality in being participant and observer, and being aware that his perspective is still his perspective;
- 2 Take an analytic reflexive stance, through which he is aware of the reciprocal influence of doing research and being researched;
- 3 Be visible, active and reflexively engaged in the text through which his feelings and experiences, and his personal engagement become apparent;
- 4 Engage with others in the field of his study, as a dialogue with 'the others' is needed to prevent self-absorption;
- 5 Be committed to an analytic agenda to gain a broader insight in social phenomena and to refine theoretical understandings of social processes.

Responding to his critics who accuse Anderson - due to his commitment to an analytic agenda - of a return to an out-of-date realistic ethnography, Anderson (2006b) acknowledges his realistic aspirations. Anderson prefers ethnography with practical consequences to build a better world; analytical auto-ethnography should seek to generalize beyond an individual case. Anderson's critics fear that this demand for generalizability may jeopardize their auto-ethnographic project in which a post-modernistic or anti-foundational orientation should be leading. However, the premises of auto-ethnography express as mentioned before a strong anti-foundational orientation.

Taking care of good narratives

Auto-ethnographic researchers care for a good narrative and set standards for the quality of their narratives. The overview which Denzin (2014) offers exemplifies that the standards have to do with flesh and blood stories, provided with tension, a plot, emotions which move and empathize readers. According to Denzin (2014: 78) valuable narratives:

- 1 "Unsettle, criticize, and challenge taken-for-granted, repressed meanings
- 2 Invite moral and ethical dialogue while reflexively clarifying their own moral position
- 3 Engender resistance and offer utopian thoughts about how things can be made different
- 4 Demonstrate that they care, that they are kind
- 5 Show instead of tell, while using the rule that less is more
- 6 Exhibit interpretive sufficiency, representational adequacy and authentic adequacy
- 7 Are political, functional, collective, and committed."

A good auto-ethnographic story should prevent that lives are turned into categories and theories, narratives should be more than another source of data to advance social theory. Good narratives are about a struggle between the personal and the cultural meanings, about that human suffering - in a broad sense - matters and that good narratives require a reflexive reader who wants to enter in dialogue with the writer (Bochner, 2001).

Some remarks concerning auto-ethnography and a complex responsive process-approach

An important difference between auto-ethnography and a complex responsive process-approach is to be noted regarding how the purpose of a narrative is articulated. As far as narratives of auto-ethnographic origin are meant to provoke resistance, utopian thoughts and political engagement, it will become clear that a complex responsive process-approach is quite restrained in connecting a general political engagement to its research. Instead of a messy world, a complex responsive process-approach departs from an unpredictable world and by that becomes logically bound to a rather modest point of view regarding the possibilities of intentional social or organizational change. However, that does not alter the fact that narratives should be for instance unsettling, dialogical, caring and authentic.

The radically reflexive character of auto-ethnography, the premises and key features as painted, and the demands for a good narrative lead to the questions of what standards for good radically reflexive research might be appropriate. Where reflexive research possesses auto-ethnographic features, the demand to account for e.g. the authenticity of the narrative will need an appropriate definition of credibility. Concerning relevance and external and internal validity of auto-ethnographic and more special of research from a complex responsive process perspective, I will frame the discussion on relevance and external and internal validity. After that I will return to how relevance and 'external and internal validity' - then between brackets - can be accounted for from a complex responsive process perspective.

In the extremes the tension between a realistic or positivistic and post-modernistic or anti-foundational orientation on science plays a part with regard to the soundness of research from a complex responsive process perspective. Radically reflexive research

has to respond to questions regarding a generalizable perspective on research, or an anti-foundational and thus relativistic perspective on research. In the discussion about relevance and external and internal validity of radically reflexive research I will argue for a reconstructive (Wagner, 1999) social realistic (Lewis and Smith, 1980) perspective; a position in between of a realistic and anti-foundational orientation (see 2.3).

Thereafter I will take up the debate around the soundness of the auto-ethnographic research (see 2.4) and later on the endorsed importance of ethical considerations within auto-ethnography (see 2.5). A complex responsive process-approach is drawn in these considerations about soundness and ethics.

2.3 Framing relevance, external and internal validity of research from an auto-ethnographic and a complex responsive process perspective

Up till now I made three different claims regarding relevance and external and internal validity. First I claimed that in my research I came to understand that ontology and epistemology are not to be distinguished, with far reaching consequences for the way you are able to take responsibility for your research. Secondly and in line with the first claim I claimed that a complex responsive process-approach departs from a reconstructive and social realistic perspective, a perspective on reality somewhere between realism/positivism and postmodernism/anti-foundationalism. Thirdly I doubted if reflexive research is as easily to compare with other research-approaches as done by Verschuren (2009), although as may be seen Verschuren develops a comparative set of criteria for different approaches of research, including what he calls a reflective approach. Verschuren's comparison will help to clarify my claims.

Practice based research making use of N or n

Verschuren's basic notion is that for practice-based research criteria for relevance, and external and internal validity must be approached in almost the same way as compared with the most common, theory-driven research. However, practice-based research is research which aims at solving a specific problem in a specific situation and as such also has to fulfil different criteria if to be of value.

Within practice-based research Verschuren differs between research in which large group of persons (N) become involved (e.g. to develop governmental policy) and in which a small group of persons (n) becomes involved (e.g. research to reorganize a department). Insider and reflective research belong to n-research. According to Verschuren theory-driven research is the kind of research which is done mostly at universities and has been too long the sole standard for all research. Practice-based research demands other criteria and accents if to be worthwhile.

I have reproduced Verschuren's (2009: 48) overview to give a general impression how his comparison works out. Double plus means that a criterion is very strongly demanded for, one plus means strongly, plus minus means to some extent and minus means not or barely demanded for. Up till now the demands from 'outside science' I indicated by relevance, the demands from 'within science' I indicated by external and internal relevance. Later on I will discuss other criteria. I added the last column to explain Verschuren's criteria with a short entry.

Table 1: Verschuren's comparison of demands for research

Demands from			Theory driven	Practice-based		Explanation
				N-type	n-type	
Within science	1	internal validity	++	++	++	exactness, credibility
	2	external validity	++	+	+-	generalizability
	3	controllability	++	++	++	transparent data collection
	4	cumulativity	++	+-	+-	contribution to knowledge
Outside science Object	5	changeability	+-	+	++	present amount of change
	6	new phenomenon	+-	+	++	amount new developments
	7	(group)process	+-	+	++	influence of processes
	8	interrelatedness	-	+-	++	connections among people
	9	small target group	-	-	++	amount of involved people
Outside science Needs	10	understandability	-	+-	++	related to target group
	11	acceptation / legitimacy	-	+-	++	related to target group
	12	research as learning process	-	-	++	related to purpose research
Outside science Knowledge	13	holism	-	+-	++	cohesive insight
	14	multidisciplarinity	-	+	++	cohesive insight
	15	manipulability	-	+	++	on behalf of interventions

From Verschuren's perspective it is easy to understand that criteria 8 up till 15 are relatively important for both N/n-types of research. This types of research are aiming at solving a problem, implying that the research has to have consequences for the behaviour of persons. Within N-type research rather indirectly, within n-type research quite directly as it concerns people nearby the researcher. Theory-driven research is positioned as rather optional regarding practical consequences, as if there are only conceptual consequences. Therefore according to Verschuren for theory-driven research the demands have less to do with what happens among people, or what hap-

pens with the results of the research. For both N/n-types of research the researcher should pay attention to the way these criteria are to be met.

According to Verschuren internal and external validity are demanded for any kind of research. Internal validity refers to the question whether what is researched is really the matter for the persons or the subject which are researched. External validity refers to the question whether the findings of the research, which are based on research in a sample, are generalizable to a larger population. Even for reflective research, which according to Verschuren is a research by using logical argumentation, thought-experiments, introspection or empathy ("Verstehen"), internal and external validity are demanded. Within Verschuren's approach it is adamant that a researcher should protect him or herself against errors. Errors regarding internal validity concern errors in design of the research, in perception and in the processing of data. Errors regarding external validity concern errors regarding sampling or the artificiality of the research environment.

That any kind of research should be internally and externally valid points to the basic propositions of Verschuren. In Verschuren's approach it is basic that through research objectivity is to be discovered. Verschuren (2009: 59) states that "... errors ... lead to producing research materials which do not correspond with the ontological reality". His methodological relativism does not go that far that he includes research in which basically the claim on an ontological objectivity is left behind. Therefore according to Verschuren every kind of research should, apart from being valid and controllable, add something to the body of knowledge, should make a cumulative contribution. Although he acknowledges the possibility of insider research (n-type) the position of the inside researcher still would be endangered by a lack of objectivity. The inside researcher can "... become involved in coalitions, by which his impartiality becomes a hard case." (Verschuren, 2009: 251). In fact Verschuren advocates the researcher as an independent or impartial spectator.

Concluding it may be clear that Verschuren on the one side accepts many ways of doing research for which different criteria for soundness of the research apply. On the other side Verschuren frames these criteria by holding on to an impartial researcher in search for some objectivity. That is why Verschuren departs from the idea that for any kind of research, demands from inside science like internal and external validity, must be accounted for. It is interesting to learn if Verschuren from his methodological relativistic point of view accepts approaches in which impartiality and objectivity are disclaimed.

A critical evaluation of Verschuren's approach

Verschuren departs from an impartial researcher looking for some objective knowledge. However, to my idea he misreads a critical and emancipatory approach of research, even in his own presentation of this approach. Although, by misreading this approach he confirms in a paradoxical - and probably unintended - way the need for a

methodological relativism. His relativism appears to be rather tolerant towards different research methods, but not towards different philosophical points of view.

To clarify my point: Verschuren states that there are three approaches of science which depart from different claims about what knowledge is. He differentiates among an empirical-analytical, phenomenological and critical-emancipatory claim. For a critical-emancipatory claim he recognizes that this perspective postulates the ideological character of any sort of knowledge. He is even aware that it is debatable that "in the standard picture of science universal valid knowledge is seen as a product of rational acting, not disrupted by an opinion, emotion, subjectivity or a different typical feminine trait." (Verschuren, 2009: 151). However, instead of concluding that demanding objectivity corresponding somehow with an ontological reality for any kind of research is illogical, he could have concluded that even concepts as 'objectivity' and 'an ontological reality' are ideologically bound. That these concepts belong to a specific - empirical-analytical - claim regarding knowledge and thus are hard to compare on a (presumed) general set of criteria. Assuming an ontological reality leads to demands for internal and external validity as defined by Verschuren. In my opinion Verschuren's position exemplifies the fallacy of circular reasoning, which in the end of course concerns every paradigm.

Paradoxically by doing that, Verschuren's conclusion exemplifies how any kind of analysis, model or classification is inescapably bound to basic knowledge claims about the relation between ontology and epistemology. If one departs from a different point of view regarding the relation between ontology and epistemology, it will lead to different ideas about standards for the quality of research.

However, it goes without saying that other ways of doing research should advance discussion about their own standards of quality and that the work of Verschuren provokes a discussion about these standards. A discussion which sometimes may be vehemently if auto-ethnographic research is accused of ideological narcissism (Shields, 2009) and empirical-analytical research of voyeurism (Denzin, 2014). I will introduce the consequences of assuming a different relation between ontology and epistemology, culminating in standards which are to be applied for an evaluation of my research.

Reconstructive social realistic knowledge claims from a complex responsive process-perspective

Recapitulating what up till now I have written about a complex responsive process-approach several key-words come to mind: radically reflexive concerning the position, values and beliefs of the researcher, oriented on responsiveness, process-oriented, critical with regard to the workings of micro-politics, oriented on the local and particular and departing from a dynamical interpretation of social reality of which unpredictability and emergence are characteristics.

From a radically reflexive stance it is obvious that an outsider's or spectator's position as a researcher is neither postulated nor possible. This way of doing research is research in the living present of the researcher self. In line with the pragmatism of Mead one can speak of a social realistic point of departure (Lewis and Smith, 1980). Mead underlines the often repeated quote of Thomas & Thomas (1928) that a definition of reality is true in its consequences, by stating that "the meaning of what we are saying is the tendency to respond to it" (Mead, 1934: 67). Responsiveness is a process of construing a reality which is true in its temporarily social construction. This transitional point of departure does not imply that through conversation anything goes. The consequences of the definitions of reality which emerge in conversations are real for those involved. This realness is real in patterns, social objects, routines, habits and beliefs, however exists and changes on-going due to polyvocal perspectives. This realness is reinforced and changed at the same time in and through social interactions. One can speak of an ongoing reconstruction of the past in the present. Therefore it seems to be appropriate to speak of a reconstructive (Wagner, 1999) social realistic research methodology to qualify research from a complex responsive process perspective.

Research from a complex responsive process-perspective helps to understand the present by placing itself within a social and dynamic perspective on reality and by offering opportunities to reflect and reconstruct the present and the past. In doing so this approach can be placed somewhere in the middle between post-modernistic relativism and modernistic objectivism. As such it represents a breach with modernistic scientific presumptions of objective observation.

Research in the living present from a radically reflexive stance in which the partiality of the researcher is fully acknowledged leads consequently to a point of view in which ontology and epistemology are not differentiated anymore. A difference between what the reality is and the way the reality is known, cannot longer be made. Writing narratives, analysing and reflecting upon experiences in the present are a designated way to catch the present. To catch what is happening, not from an assumed objective perspective, but from a perspective to describe how an organizational reality is construed. From this radically reflexive perspective there is no way to escape from value-based postulates, which, is illustrated by Verschuren in the way he includes a critical-emancipatory perspective in his model.

But again if ontology and epistemology are not to be separated the case still is that from this perspective a discussion about standards of sound research should be advanced. Regarding a complex responsive process-approach I will do that in the next paragraph by going into discussions about criteria for sound research which evolved around auto-ethnographic research. I doing that I assume that a complex responsive process-approach will be confronted with the same criticisms as auto-ethnographic research and that something can be learned from these discussions.

2.4 Research standards for a complex responsive process-approach

From a realist-positivistic perspective on social scientific research auto-ethnographic research is criticized for several reasons (Alvesson, 2009; Chang, 2008; Denzin, 2014; Douglas and Carless, 2013; Ellis et al., 2011; Parry and Boyle, 2009):

- 1 Narratives based on personal experiences are not supposed to be generalizable, reliable and valid, implicating that the research is not 'rigorous'. External and internal validity and controllability would be at stake. The criticism postulates that personal experience would be too self-absorbing and unavoidably biased. By that narratives would become uncontrollable and credibility would depend too much on the researcher;
- 2 Narratives based on personal experiences are qualified as too evocative, implying that too much weight on emotional, aesthetic and therapeutic dimensions forestalls an analytical approach;
- 3 Narratives based on personal experiences are supposed to endanger privacy and may have political implications beyond the research. Turning this criticism around it implicates that too much realism (sic!) should be avoided.

Apart from these criticisms one big advantage of auto-ethnography is recognized: this kind of research would offer good research economy (Alvesson, 2003; Brinkmann, 2012), for instance in finding an organization to do your research. Although this advantage is also contested because we as researchers " ... are not paid generous salaries to sit in our offices obsessing about ourselves." (Delamont, 2007: 3). What may be clear is that radically reflexive research can count on quite some resistance from scientists who profess mainstream science.

Responding to the criticisms mentioned above, researchers adopted two strategies in an attempt to develop standards for sound radically reflexive research. A first strategy is – almost apologetically – to discuss the quality of auto-ethnographic research within the frame of mainstream research by arguing that auto-ethnographic research is valid, generalizable and reliable. A second strategy is to argue for a different set of criteria to concur upon the value of auto-ethnographic research in its own class. This second strategy argues for immanent criteria, depending on the basic knowledge claims within an approach. In my view both strategies converge because by giving a new meaning to concepts as for instance internal validity, researchers indicate that they want to be evaluated by a set of immanent criteria. A logical claim if ontologically one presumes that social reality is dynamic and messy.

Nonetheless, within reflexive science there seems to be a hesitation regarding developing a set of immanent criteria. In responding to the criticisms one should be aware not to adopt inadvertently the premises of the critics (Deetz, 1996), amongst others to be avoided by blocking an ambition to develop an alternate set of universal criteria. There are no meta-languages (Gingrich-Philbrook, 2013). If that would be the case this

alternate set of criteria could turn out as a habitual ceremonial legitimization, this time in a reflexive context (Alvesson et al., 2008) and on their turn these new conventions would silence cultural criticism (Denzin, 2014). It could become a 'criteriological' pitfall (Koch and Harrington, 1998). I will come back to this hesitation when presenting the standards to assess my research.

On transferability as a form of generalizability, reliability and validity

If basically is postulated that knowledge is contingent upon perspective, place and time, the meaning and usefulness of the concepts reliability, validity and generalizability are altered within an auto-ethnographic perspective (Ellis et al., 2011). Reliability, as a condition for internal validity, is translated into the question whether the narrator really could have had these experiences; from an ethnographic perspective if the narrator has been there (O'Reilly, 2005). The research should be authentic, credible or plausible; social interactions and events should be imaginable by those involved and by readers. External validity is translated into the question whether the research seeks verisimilitude: is it lifelike, believable and possible in the eye of the readers? At least the research " ... must make sense to others, resonate with the experience of others and be persuasive to them." (Stacey and Griffin, 2005: 27). Generalizability is translated in the question whether the research connects to the experiences of the reader, if the research makes sense with the audience's own sense making (Cunliffe and Coupland, 2012). Writing about her experiences as an Indian immigrant to the USA Pathak (2013) endorses that her story should be accountable in relation with the stories of other immigrants, contextual in relation with the societal surrounding, truthful concerning the openness about the experiences and connected to others who participate in the same community.

Generalizability, reliability and validity thus are translated in transferability, implying that the results of the research will not point to a shared ontological social reality, but to a recognition of and maybe identification with conceivable experiences. I would say, even conceivable for non-members of the community wherein the research is undertaken. From the standpoint of Verschuren (2009) transferability would be an expression of the understandability, acceptance and legitimacy of the research. One might speak of ecological validity, being "... the degree to which the behaviors observed and recorded in a study reflect the behaviors that actually occur in natural settings." (Agar, 2013: 37).

I will use transferability as one of the standards to assess my research. For a thorough understanding of this transferability it is essential to emphasize that within a complex responsive process-approach the individual is never interpreted in an atomistic, individualistic or autonomous way. Within a complex responsive process-approach the self is only a self because it is born within a particular society, constantly arising in interactions with others (Mowles, 2011). If the individual is individual only as far as the individual can be understood as a social being, then individual experiences by definition reflect shared - but not identical - experiences. Verisimilitude therefore only is to be

understood on the basis of recognisability, as much as plausibility of the research is only to be understood when there is something comparable to find in the experiences. Verisimilitude is not a search for some unique essence in shared experiences and context of the researcher and the reader, but an interpretive sharing of experiences and reflections by the researcher and reader. Getting acquainted with these experiences might make a difference for the reader.

By emphasizing transferability the evaluation of the quality of the research is transferred to the reader who evaluates the research in terms of historical, moral, political and ideological plausibility, besides its vitality (Koch, 1998). The research should exhibit interpretive sufficiency, representational and authentic adequacy (Denzin, 2014), which comes down to possessing an amount of depth and detail which elicits a critical consciousness of the reader, avoiding stereotyping, encompassing a polyvocal moral discernment and promoting social transformation. As mentioned before differences exist between a complex responsive process and an auto-ethnographic approach regarding the possibilities of intended social transformation. However, to manipulate for instance a large population or an organization based on the research findings, being a criterion suggested by Verschuren (2009), is not in order for both approaches.

If the research has no transferable value, then the research may only have had a therapeutic effect on the researcher. As such the research would belong to mental health care instead of to the field of OMS. The needed transferability can be seen as ongoing iterations of taking responsibility, however never indented as if this is done from a spectator's perspective or an objective point of view (Mowles, 2011).

In a more practical sense careful documentation (Alvesson, 2009), member checking (Anderson, 2006a), and a reflexive account of the research process (Koch and Harrington, 1998) including used techniques (Chang, 2008) would help to legitimate auto-ethnographic or more general radically reflexive research. These more practical provisions would permit controllability of the research.

On evocative and realistic writing in radically reflexive research

Another criticism on auto-ethnographic research and by that on research from a complex responsive process-approach is that research would be too emotional instead of being analytical, implying that the research should go beyond instead of staying close to individual experiences (Delamont, 2007). However, in accepting this criticism one would silence anxieties, the human bodies in conflict and the uncertainty of human life in exchange for a sterile, impersonal and objectivistic perspective (Burkitt, 1999; Holman Jones et al., 2013b).

From a reflexive perspective it can be argued that by abstracting from local and personal situations it is suggested that the abstractions are more real than its sources (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2009; Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2011; Stacey and Griffin, 2005; Tsoukas and Hatch, 2012). Instead of reifying abstractions emotive and intuitive

dimensions should be ordinary elements of the narratives used for the research. Conflict, dissensus, irony and playfulness go along with deep emotions and intuitions and as such are of consequence for how human beings construe their reality. Not writing about emotions, uncertainty or anxiety would suggest that human beings are only or are predominantly rational beings. This writing would disrespect or even obscure common human life. Instead 'irrationality' is common and productive as is underlined by years of psychological (Kahneman, 2011) and neurobiological research (Damasio, 1999). 'Irrationality' is real, 'irrational' persons are real.

It must be clear now that research from an auto-ethnographic and a complex responsive process-approach is disclosing much about the acting of real persons in the organization of the researcher. If a reader is familiar with this organization it will be possible to relate what is narrated about to specific persons in the organization. Narratives have a habit of being realistic in a sense of showing what happens.

This realism is acknowledged as research from behind the front-stage is often assessed as well-done (Alvesson, 2003). On the other hand realism is criticised because apparently there is anxiety for washing one's dirty linen in public (Sonnville, 2005). However, reflexive research should help to understand dilemma's in practical situations instead of disregarding them (Holman Jones et al., 2013b).

In radically reflexive research - as research from an auto-ethnographic and complex responsive process-perspective implies - evocative and realistic writing is acknowledging the genuineness of human social life. I would say that evocative and realistic writing are evident conditions in support of transferability of the research. Transferability does justice to real persons.

Responsibility for the reader

Transferability as a measure for the usefulness of radically reflexive research implies responsibility for the reader. First of all I would expect quite some respect for the shown vulnerability of the involved people. Secondly I would like the reader to be interested to learn what happened and to be aware of the interdependency among people for what they are doing. Basically a good question would be if the reader could and would have acted similarly or differently in a comparable situation. This is a question which not only underlines an ethical responsibility of the reader, but also would underline the dialogical usefulness of the research.

However, without prejudice to the responsibility of the reader the responsibility of the researcher is different and large. After all, the researcher is the one who decides what to write about him and about other persons. This responsibility of the researcher is of an ethical kind and is an important subject to consider and forms a source for the research standards for radically reflexive research.

2.5 Ethical responsibilities regarding my research

During the start of my research some ethical issues were dealt with, for instance the permission to write about my experiences in my working environment. In due course I came to understand the importance of paying attention to ethical issues regarding my research. To illustrate: in recent years I was invited several times to give a lecture or a master class in conferences. In my presentation I told what actually the case was. I gave a sketch of the muddle we departed from and how behind the shining results there was a world of lucky coincidence, pragmatic decisions and still unrealized ambitions. In general the ratings for my contributions were high, obviously participants liked realistic stories. However, in one of my last contributions to a conference I was taken off guard by a question whether it was allowed for me to sketch all this messy business. Although in a general sense I have arranged that I can publish and tell about the results of my research I suddenly felt a heavy responsibility because I realized that I did not know who was in the audience, let alone have an idea what the consequences of my contribution could be. Suppose a high ranked civil servant of the Ministry of Education was one of the listeners to a story about some muddle in the UAS?

Within the tradition of a complex responsive process-perspective on research I would expect a lot of attention for ethical questions about auto-ethnographic oriented research, because of all the potentially indiscrete consequences of the research. However, the attention is very restricted, in literature and to my experience in the learning group. In their book on a complexity approach on researching organizations Stacey and Griffin (2005) acknowledge the importance of ethical considerations. "The first matter has to do with writing about people with whom one is interacting and the related issue of disclosing confidential material. In a more conventional approach, involving, say, interviews, the ethical approach is usually to inform those whom one is writing about of what one is doing and to show them what one has written, concealing identities as appropriate. However, a researcher writing about his or her own personal experience of his everyday work activities can hardly keep informing people that he may possibly write about what they are doing together. The best that can be done is to inform colleagues in general about what one is doing and then to write about the experience in a way that does not reveal their identities but still presents a 'reliable' account of what is going on. Other than this, there is no general ethical rule to guide the researcher in the traditional sense of thought before action. Consistent with the complex responsive processes approach, the ethics of what one does as a researcher, as with what one does in all other situations, is contingent upon the situation and the emerging and ongoing negotiation with those with whom one is interacting." Stacey and Griffin continue that "the second ethical matter has to do with inviting people to undertake a form of research that can carry with it considerable risks. The risks are potentially hostile responses from others whom one is writing about and the threats what is written may present to existing power relations and

one's own job security. Here again there can be no general ethical rule, only the contingent negotiation of how to proceed in particular situations so that the research work does not create undue risks for the researcher." (Stacey and Griffin, 2005: 26).

I agree with Stacey and Griffin that what actually will happen is contingent upon the situation as it evolves. However, to state twice that what a researcher does is contingent upon the situation and that there is no general rule in regard of ethical issues, seems to me a matter of an overdone wish for consistency in regard of their own propositions about the localness of what happens. I have three arguments to criticize this rather 'situationistic' stance.

First of all within science there are strict guidelines about what and how to research. It is good to remind that every research is framed within general ethical imperatives regarding research (Creswell, 2007). Furthermore these imperatives have to do with respect for the right of self-determination of participants and are not only there to protect the researcher. The imperatives are about being honest in analysing data, avoiding plagiarism and to organize controllability of your research. Moreover, an ethical awareness is advisable because of liability for unintended suffering due to research (e.g. APA, 2002). Cautiousness is needed. Ethical considerations are demanded before the actual research.

My second argument is methodological. If for good reasons ontology and epistemology are not separated within a complex responsive process-approach, if the boundaries of what and how to research are blurred, an ethical reflection is indicated. The blurred boundaries between ontology and epistemology implicate that values and norms are omnipresent, embedded in what you do and in what you are doing to know. Not only ontology and epistemology cannot be differentiated, but neither can axiology. There is power in truth (Foucault, 1980). Thus values and norms are a powerful matter of facts in research from a complex responsive process perspective. Therefore ethical considerations should play an important role in a radically reflexive approach before and during the research.

Thirdly, the stance taken by Stacey and Griffin suggests a kind of loose appreciation of the historicity of human ethical behaviour. In an elaborated analysis of human history Stuurman (2009) exemplifies how ethical convictions have a history of more than 2800 years. It took a long time for human beings to understand themselves as being part of humankind and to develop ethical ideas about mutual relating. Given the longstanding effort in human history to build up some sort of ethical awareness there is no arbitrary un-ethical situation or participant. Ethics are present in any situation. Therefore again, I think that a researcher has explicit and strong obligations regarding ethical dimensions of research. Especially in regard with radically reflexive research there are obligations because the researcher initiates a special situation within an intimate situation. The fact that the researcher takes the initiative of doing research and is writing about other people, and is taking the risk of hostile responses, empha-

sizes strongly the necessity of ethical awareness and ethical responsibility. This ethical responsibility should not solely depend upon what evolves in the situation but should be reflected upon before, during and after the research. To my view there is nothing against ethical thought before action (Griffin, 2002) as long as you do not suppose that thought determines what evolves. Thought is just another form of action. Moreover, taking responsibility for the limits of your research also is an obligation (Denzin, 2014) and apparently there are ethical limits.

To be able to reflect upon and to take responsibility for my research I will elaborate on the way ethical matters are - at least theoretically - dealt with from an auto-ethnographic perspective, to be followed by a first account of my own research. The ethical awareness in auto-ethnographic research inspires to take ethical responsibility for my research.

Careful research: ethical guidelines

Most researchers working within the field of auto-ethnography show a great awareness of the ethical implications of their research. In the recently published Handbook of Auto-ethnography (Holman Jones et al., 2013a) there is only one out of thirty-four chapters which does not include the word ethics. From their writings it is obvious that these researchers acknowledge that what they write is easy to retrace to existing persons or organizations. Unintentionally persons or even the researcher himself may be harmed by publication of the findings. According to Tullis (2013: 258) "the edict *do no harm* should serve as an ever-present guiding principle for protecting others while considering if and how doing auto-ethnography can cause harm to the researcher as well." (Italics Tullis).

Ethical considerations regarding research move between anticipation (Tolich, 2010) and ongoing uncertainty or doubt (Brinkmann, 2012). Carefulness obliges a researcher to reflect upon and to take care of ethical issues not only at the beginning of his research. Unpredictability of what will become visible during the research makes that sometimes issues have to be settled during the research process. If others have agreed upon being part of the narrative, but experience their vulnerability after reading what is written, ethical issues concerning privacy and consent have to be dealt with on the spot. Guidelines can help, but they never are able to discharge a researcher from his situational responsibilities. One might call that *phronesis*, because on the spot the researcher has to navigate between the purity of the guidelines and the methodological prescriptions (Brinkmann, 2012).

Regarding ethical awareness for auto-ethnographic researchers Tullis (2013) comes up with seven 'commandments'. Paraphrased they read as follows:

- 1 Do no harm to self and others. Acknowledge the potential personal and professional harm for others and yourself as a researcher, minimize the risks and maximize the benefits.

- 2 Consult your institutional review board. Translated in more general terms this implicates that your research should suffice the prescriptions regarding morally justified research. Consulting should not be done in an administrative way but by actively engaging others in a discussion about your research.
- 3 Get informed consent. Be sure that involved or participants consent with your research as early as possible, consent which should be based on respect for autonomy, voluntariness and being informed.
- 4 Practice process consent and explore the ethics of consequence. Consent at the beginning of the research should be followed up by keeping on discussing about what is happening during the research and what may be potential findings. Participants must be able to reflect upon their participation during the whole research process.
- 5 Do a member check. Afford those who appear in the research opportunities to comment and correct interpretations and observations and even to rescind.
- 6 Do not present publicly or publish anything you would not show the persons mentioned in the text. Even if persons never will have access to what is published about them, this guideline reflects a thoughtful honesty.
- 7 Do not underestimate the afterlife of a published narrative. Consider what might be the consequences for participants and yourself as researcher after the publication. Different audiences might read different things in your narrative.

The guidelines provide a good starting point for doing radically reflexive research. However, Etherington (2004) and Tolich (2010) emphasize power issues surrounding research. For participants it will not be easy to rescind given their initial consent. A researcher has professional power and of course professional interests in the output of his research. From an ethnographic perspective O'Reilly (2005) states that guidelines are helpful that they do not offer a solution in all cases. Especially if research is innovative, guidelines can be too restrictive. Ethical considerations should keep the researcher reflexive and critical. An auto-ethnographic account of the researcher could help to balance the power between the researched and researcher by revealing the insecurities and powerlessness in academia (O'Reilly, 2005). So once more it comes down to situational craftsmanship of the researcher to account for what he or she is doing.

Taken the seven ethical commandments as point of departure I conclude that privacy and political implications can be taken care of. Taken care in the sense that potential hazards are recognized, and that informed consent in advance and during the research process must be guaranteed. Against being accused of spying (Brannick and Coghlan, 2007) there is no general remedy, except to be as clear as possible about the purpose of the research and the measures taken to ensure privacy. Writing under a pseudonym or pseudonyms for participants might help a bit.

To conclude it is obvious that within an auto-ethnographic tradition ethical awareness has captured attention. Given the often lifelike, personal and recognizable narratives which are written, this awareness should be indisputable for any research where

persons and organizations are retraceable. Moreover, given the generally societal prestige of science ethical awareness is adamant.

However, from what I read in auto-ethnographic articles (Alexander, 2014; Boylorn, 2013, 2014; Hao, 2014; Johnson, 2014; Mingé, 2013; Mingé and Sterner, 2014; Morella-Pozzi, 2014; Pathak, 2013; Yomtoo, 2014) I notice that ethical accounts of involving other persons are missing despite the articulated guidelines (Tullis, 2013) and the criticism on this point (Tolich, 2010). Frentz (2008) is a rare exception by stating that he used pseudonyms. Whether the involved participants are informed and in which way the researcher has taken care of the consequences of the publication remains unknown in almost all publications. As far as I am familiar with auto-ethnographic research sometimes the proclaimed ethical awareness sounds a bit hypocrite.

Even if the ethical accounts are missing in auto-ethnographic publications I still see no reason to abstain from them in my own research.

About my narratives: informed and process consent

Talking with one of my colleagues about my research the colleague assumed that my thesis after being finished would be a bestseller within the UAS. At once his response again faced me up to the fact that an ethical account for my research is important. Unintentionally I can harm people within or interests of the UAS. At the same time I realize that from my experience things are as they are. I cannot undo things; the only thing I can do is to take responsibility for the way I took care of informed and process consent, and the way I write about it.

A basic consideration is to make a very strict distinction between the narratives and the analyses and reflections upon the narratives. The analyses and reflections are mine, meaning that they are on account of me as a researcher participating in the learning group. They are sometimes read by some of the people involved, just to inform. The only person to be held responsible for the analyses and reflections am I.

In a general sense my research was authorized by the President of the Board. With him I discussed beforehand what kind of research this would be – as far as I understood this at the beginning of my research – to get his approval. During the research he read my narratives and reflections, not to correct them, but to read what I was writing about the UAS. In principle he had the possibility to prevent to publish about some issues. It never occurred.

The narratives as such are read by the specific people involved. Before starting to write about them I informed them about my research, I asked their approval of being written about and promised that they would be able to read and to comment on the narratives. In discussing the narratives – sometimes in person, sometimes by e-mail – I emphasised that the narratives were my perception of the situation and in the event of disagreement I would correct the narratives as far as the disagreement was about

facts (for instance what did someone exactly say, or time and place) or if my interpretation of what happened would produce a too distorted picture of the one involved.

In total this generated three changes in my narratives, other than about facts. In the narrative on the project on identity-management I added some nuances in my perception of the intentions of two of the persons involved. In the narrative on consent I did not come to terms with one of the persons involved about the interpretation of what was said and I left out the passage about that specific moment.

In the narratives the specific people have a pseudonym, based on the initials of their function. For outsiders these pseudonyms give some protection against potential indiscretions or violations of privacy. Of course insiders know who are involved. So there starts the responsibility for the reader to deal carefully with what is read.

To provide in carefulness from my side in the narratives I left out any remark regarding personal matters or personal relations. If in the heat of the discussion undiplomatic language was used, I left that out. Unavoidably this leads to an impression that discussions are more civilized than in reality.

I conclude that in terms of informed and process consent I was careful regarding the interests of the specific people involved. None of the involved objected to this research or about the publication. No one had some second thoughts about being involved in it.

Still a lot of other people are involved, sometimes because they appear in the narratives, although rather anonymously. A lot of other people are always involved, because I am writing about their organization. The best I can hope for is that they will recognize what I am writing about.

Still there is the ethics of consequence. What will happen when outsiders read about the micro-politics within the UAS? I will return to that issue in the final chapter, although of course I cannot predict what will happen.

To prevent Stapelism: fraud and controllability of radically reflexive research

In recent years the worldwide scientific community was stirred up by the Stapel- affair. Stapel is a world famous scientist who appeared to have committed fraud on a large scale with his data. Due to this affair, which came to light in 2011, recommendations were made to prevent fraud (Commissie Levelt et al., 2012). Basically trust in the intentions of scientists must be upheld. However, it is suggested to create learning and research environments which embed scientists in a professional culture where fraud is excluded. Specifically it is recommended to arrange strict management and control of research data, thereby amongst others enabling replication of the research.

The Stapel-affair evolved amidst of my research and I realized that radically reflexive research is vulnerable for accusations of fraud because of the "personal" basis of the research.

However, the way of doing research within a complex responsive process-approach by working intensively in a learning group has created beforehand an environment in which fraud is prevented. From the beginning as a researcher I was confronted with strict demands in regard of narrating, analysing and reflecting. Demands which in principle make it impossible to fake.

Faking still might possible by inventing stories behind your computer screen. The ethical obligation to have the narratives read by the people involved prevents this kind of fraud.

Although measures for prevention of fraud were not taken at the beginning of my research I consider myself fortunate to have retained most of the written comments of the people involved and of the members of the learning group. Moreover, I kept a notebook, in which I articulated reflections during the whole PhD-project. If needed my movement of thought can be controlled by external supervisors. Due to the discussions about scientific fraud for my last project I even arranged that the involved people in the project signed my reports about the sessions we had. I did not ask them to sign for agreement, but to sign for having seen the report, with some space for remarks.

It would be wise that in the near future some rules about the controllability of radically reflexive research are formulated. Rules which must be seen as an obligation the researcher has to pay attention to, given his specific responsibility as a researcher.

2.6 Sound research from the perspective of a complex responsive process-approach

With the reflections in this chapter in mind and based on the used literature, I propose a set of criteria which I find useful to evaluate my research. Because I am warned not to develop an alternate set of criteria which starts to function as a universal set of criteria within a reflexive context (Alvesson et al., 2008; Deetz, 1996; Denzin, 2014; Koch and Harrington, 1998) I am not pretending that these criteria are to be used for any kind of reflexive research. The criteria are developed for my research, although they may inspire other researchers. Within the realm of a complex responsive process-approach these criteria can be seen as enabling and constraining research at the same time. The criteria will be constraining if they are contaminated with the suggestion of universalism. The criteria will be enabling as an invitation to reflect on what you are doing as a researcher. The criteria might be adapted to and supplemented in regard of someone's other case.

The criteria will apply to the narratives, the analyses and the reflections as presented in the chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6. The narratives, the analyses and the reflections together are the constituent components of my research. These chapters reflect the content and preliminary interpretations within my research. However, given the reflexive character of the research the concluding chapter 7 is inextricably bound up with the preceding chapters. The concluding chapter has apart from its synoptic purpose, the purpose of synthesizing and gaining more in-depth reflection on all the findings, the analyses and reflections regarding one of more major subjects which emerged during the research process. As such the criteria also apply to the final chapter this thesis.

Recapitulating I come to a set of 5 criteria to evaluate my research:

- 1 The research should have an analytical and reflexive character. This implicates that the taken for granted assumptions of me as a researcher should be made visible and should be reflected upon with regard to the results of the research. Moreover, my research should be done against a critical analysis and reflections on relevant existing literature concerning the topics of the research. At least in the conclusions concerning the research it must be made visible how and why analysis and reflexivity lead to changing insights regarding the topics at hand. In the analysis and reflection I must stay close to the narratives taking them seriously as the empirical core of the research.
- 2 The research should be done as a full member of the community the research is about. I cannot be a participating observer, but must be an observing participant in and of the daily activities in that community. The research is situational, local and written from a mindful I-perspective.
- 3 The research should deliver well written and interesting narratives. It should be narratives which give a clear, challenging, careful and enriching perspective on the situations, social interactions and/or activities as experienced by me as being the researcher.
- 4 The research should be transferable. Transferability implies that the experiences, the analysis, reflections and conclusions of my research must resonate, be recognised and understandable by people who are working in more or less the same circumstances. Authenticity must be secured by being sure that I have been in these circumstances and may have had the experiences. By transferability the social relevance of the research is underlined.
- 5 I should take responsibility for my research by paying attention to and reporting about ethical matters of process and informed consent, and the ethics of consequences. Moreover, I should make it possible to be controlled on fraud. Facing the reader with the reader's responsibility concerning the sensitivity of the research is a final obligation.

In line with the suggestions of the Dutch committees on prevention of scientific fraud (Commissie Levelt et al., 2012) researchers should be embedded in communities where they are invited to reflect on these issues.

At the end of my thesis I will reflect upon my research starting from these criteria. Based on these criteria a part of the final reflection on my research can be condensed to answering three questions:

- 1 Am I able to make plausible how - against the background of my beliefs and values - 'time for interruption', 'performativity' and 'bricoleur' (mentioned in chapter 1) emerge as a consequence of the analytical and reflexive efforts I have performed?
- 2 Do my narratives bear witness of being involved in social interactions and do they seduce the readers to take notice of and to identify with the research-findings?
- 3 Do I pursue my ethical obligations as a researcher regarding consent and controllability properly?

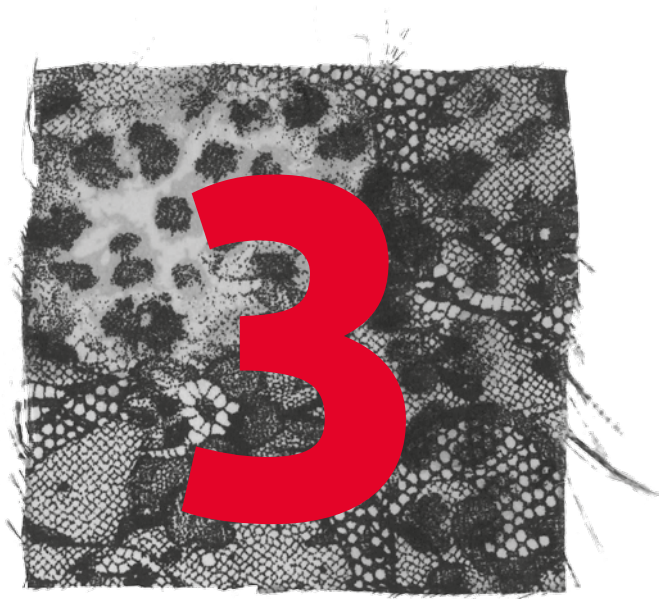
2.7 What to expect? Conclusions and perspective

In this chapter in a general sense I have positioned a complex responsive process-approach in a wider context of scientific and philosophical traditions. A complex responsive process-approach is embedded in reflexive, practice, critical and complexity turns within social sciences. Common in all these turns is that the position of the researcher is critically examined. It is acknowledged that a researcher is included in the way research is done, amongst others thereby legitimizing research from a radically reflexive point of view. Research from an auto-ethnographic and complex responsive process-perspective is radically reflexive.

This kind of research has already a tradition; especially auto-ethnographic research has an acknowledged tradition within reflexive approaches. In elaborating in an appreciative and critical way on auto-ethnographic research I have formulated the initial demands for good research from a complex responsive process perspective. It is important to underline that research from a complex responsive process-perspective is process-oriented and that a full account of used method, emerged subjects of discussion can only be given at the end of the research-process. This chapter is introductory, to give an idea of what is coming and how I will take responsibility for my research.

What has become clear is that there are quite some ethical issues to pay attention to. Informed and process consent, an ethics of consequences, prevention of fraud and certain responsibilities of the reader have been discussed. Secondly I paid quite some attention to discussions about the scientificity of radically reflexive research, leading to criteria which have to do with the transferable, reflexive and realistic character of the research. Thirdly I came up with a set of criteria which seem to be amendable for my research. Based on them I also will be capable to reflect upon the limitations of my research.

This chapter is a prelude on four chapters, which are part of my research. Being involved in my research as a researcher, an exploration of my taken for granted assumptions, which undeniable influenced my research from the onset, will be the subject of the next chapter. What follows are three chapters, including narratives based on my experiences with a project on identity-management, on the internal process of developing performance agreements and on a discussion about the potential of constructive dissent for organizational development. The narratives in the different chapters are followed by reflections and analyses. These reflections and analyses are provoked by discussions in the learning group and by reading upon scientific literature. In the final chapter I will retake the methodological and ethical issues from this second chapter, together with a reflection on my contribution to the field of OMS, more specifically with regard to the UAS.



My taken for granted assumptions as a researcher

The narrative which is presented in this chapter is about me. It was written between October 2010 and July 2011. As presented here it is the fourth version of the narrative. In writing the narrative I figured out and described what my taken for granted assumptions are. Trying to get hold on one's own taken for granted ideas is adamant when starting radically reflexive research.

My taken for granted assumptions - or if you like values and beliefs, basic convictions or orientations - have implications for the way I experience working in the UAS. These assumptions have consequences for how I interpret possible shortcomings or problems in my organization. Or even more accurate: in a certain way they produce what I experience as a problem. What I problematize may be not the same or no problem at all for someone else.

My experiences, the way I interpret my life, my work and my fellow human beings are described. I elaborate on how my assumptions evolved during my life (see 3.1. up till 3.5). By acknowledging them I underline the radically reflexive stance taken. However, as indicated before the description cannot be exhaustive and accurate, because 'to know thyself' is always a selective temporarily reconstruction. To connect my taken for granted assumptions with my initial orientation on my research I offer a brief sketch of the way I interpret the policy of the UAS (see 3.6).

In this chapter the reader can also observe how I start to understand a complex responsive process-approach related to my self-reflection. My appropriation of a complex responsive process-approach still is rather analytically, but starts to weaken my taken for granted assumptions (see 3.7). In the short reflection at the end of this chapter I will come back to that (see 3.8). In this reflection I try to get hold on how my thoughts moved during the first phase of my research. In chapter 7 all my movements of thought will be brought together, flowing into some synoptic reflections and conclusions on my research.

3.1 My paradigm in a nutshell: about default assumptions

In 2010 I was convinced that the ongoing engagement of as many as possible members of staff and offices is necessary to be a UAS which is capable in being part of and adapting to new developments. This engagement is indispensable if routines of members of staff are perceived as in need of change, especially if far reaching changes are foreseen. However, you should be aware that in situations of change someone's identity is at stake because an existing identity is set to music by its routines.

In my view engagement has to do with feelings of identification and responsibility for one's organization. Therefore bringing about enduring change should be regarded as a complicated and delicate phenomenon. In my experience one of the main reasons for

failure of change-projects is that not enough attention is paid to the stubbornness of self-evident routines in human behaviour.

I am not stating that the self-evident routines are to be interpreted as annoying obstacles. Self-evident routines contain precious benefits of experience and develop through interactions in ongoing practice. Therefore successful enduring change is dependent on the way self-evident routines are addressed during periods of change.

This addressing is open to many alternatives. I was convinced that change is something which will take place in a self-organizing way if the involved human beings are taken seriously and are not subordinated to clear-cut managerial prescriptions. I even was convinced that change would have better results if you give some sort of self-organization a chance. However, how to understand and to take advantage of self-organization is an ambiguous question because of the inherent paradoxical nature of this phenomenon.

In a nutshell this was my paradigm in 2010 in which my actions were incorporated. It is an amalgam of philosophical and scientific notions, amongst others about language and communication. My paradigm contains ideas about micro-power, self-organization, co-creativity, social constructionism and conversational approaches. Generally I can be characterized by an anti-authoritarian orientation, a certain philosophical detachment of everyday life, a problem-solving attitude, alongside an ongoing curiosity for new trends and developments. I feel connected to recent concepts like the wisdom of the crowd, prosumerism or crowd sourcing. These concepts proclaim that joint efforts of experts, consumers or citizens give more effective results than the traditional way of design, production and consumption (Leadbeater, 2009; Li and Bernoff, 2008; Tapscott, 2008).

I call these notions my default assumptions, a concept I learned from the cognitive sciences in 1987 (Minsky, 1986). I qualify them as default because I am aware that what I think is true as long as it is not refuted. However, refuting is not done easily, because my defaults are dear to me. They are strong and mostly unconscious habitual interpretation of what is happening. My defaults are my paradoxical originality: they are who I am as a unique person and at the same time they are the ongoing result of interactions within the environments I grew up. They are my identity. Now getting acquainted with the work of the social psychologist Mead I compare my defaults with the 'me's' as defined by him. Within a naturalistic tradition Mead (1934) defined a 'me' as an organized attitude, of which some are activated within interaction. Mead defined the 'I' as the present and identifiable mixture of attitudes, what a person presents during interaction. So, I interpret who I am and what I do not as a deliberate choice but as an activation and ongoing development of some of my defaults in interaction with my fellow human beings. Simultaneously I am an identifiable, a shifting and an unsettled human presence amidst other shifting and unsettled human beings.

As a logical consequence of my paradigm I also see my fellow human beings as paradoxical original individuals, as “we must be others if we are to be ourselves.” (Mead, 1925: 276). I see my fellow human beings as individual human beings who have identities which have been developed during their life-time, which are precious to them but at the same time not chosen by them. Individual human beings are living paradoxes.

My defaults are inevitably normative: prescriptive generalizations towards reality. They are ontologically given in my everyday life (Burkitt, 1999). Although my defaults are not my own invention, they are so obviously – literally – incorporated that they serve as my intentions and criteria of evaluation regarding what happens. I am well aware that my paradigm has become my ideal in which lifelong experiences shine through. In practice it is as difficult for me as for any other to realize my plans, even if my plans are nourished by a seemingly high standing ideal of maximal engagement. I expect that my research will provide an opportunity to test my paradigm.

Because of the type of research I want to undertake it is important to be aware of my defaults. I am co-responsible for the history and the problems of my organization. I also want to be a part of the problem solving so I have to be aware of my own story. First, because my story has a co-defining impact on my perception of the problems and the way I want to solve them. Second, my defaults will play a part in the interpretation of the research findings. Especially in narrative based research it is important to be aware of one's own defaults because of their (historic) interaction with the narratives of others (Kohler Riessman, 2008).

In the next parts I narratively describe some important private and professional life events, which to my recollection are crucial in the development of my defaults. I also recall how I reflected on these experiences, a reflection which provided me with ideas to get some hold on my experiences. I finish with some rough ideas as a context for my research project.

3.2 Defaults-genesis part I: growing up to be an adult

My teenage years

Although nowadays I have a strong naturalistic philosophical orientation (in short: humans beings as natural beings), in my teenage years I was fascinated with eastern philosophy, romantic literature, science fiction and fantasy. As apparently an average adolescent I was seeking some kind of spiritual orientation. Looking eastward was also a reflection of the 1970s in which alternative life styles emerged and in which secularization took a next step in society. But I suppose my spiritual quest also reflected an experience which I had when I was 8 years old. Asking a priest how on earth we could blame the Jews for crucifying Jesus if everything was foreseen by God, he put me down by saying that I was too young to understand these problems. I felt humiliated and I remember that somehow I decided to disassociate me from the Catholic Church,

evaluating the Catholic Church by the hypocrisy of one of its representatives. Whatever my age, to my feeling the priest did not have an answer to this question and could not admit his lack of knowledge. Disassociating proved not to be a hard problem because my parents were rather easy on religious matters.

I call my teenage years my Romantic period, Romantic in the philosophical meaning of the word. I saw a world in which the macro and the micro level are connected and I supposed that an individual was part of something bigger. This perspective still contributes to my orientation on the world as an interdependent and socio-evolutionary phenomenon, although nowadays not in a spiritualistic sense. It also contributes to my some sort of optimistic stoicism towards what is happening. Somehow I was caught by a fundamental belief that things are interdependent and will be balanced.

My teenage years were also decisive for my political and pedagogical orientations. 'No church', 'no boss', 'no omnipotent parents', 'no capitalism' and 'no government' were inspiring themes in the 1970s. I experienced them as years of liberation of mind-controlling and compartmentalized ways of thinking about religion, politics, social relations and education. I was infected with an allergy for authorities. An example of this allergy is when I got fired in 1973. I refused to negotiate directly about overtime with the highest chief of the store I worked for. The day before he had refused to talk with me and had directed me to my supervisor. So, I also directed him to my supervisor. At that age – and still nowadays – I somehow had no respect for authority based on position instead of quality of arguments.

Student & marriage

From 1975 till 1981 I attended the university, studying social pedagogy and philosophy. In 1981 I got my master's degree in social pedagogy. From a neo-Marxist and emancipatory perspective I wrote a thesis on a model of ecologically situated interventions. The premise of this perspective was that behaviour could not be interpreted as an individual decision, but was related to its context. For the same reason individuals could not be held fully responsible for their misfortune and should be supported. I learned to interpret behaviour as context related.

Paramount for my epistemology was becoming acquainted with the concept of the paradigm developed by Thomas Kuhn (1922 – 1996). Because of the logical restrictions it placed on science and reasoning it politicizes knowledge and therefore even the truth of science becomes negotiable. Emancipation, context and paradigm became part of my defaults.

In 1977 I got married. Being married is also living close on one spot and learning to deal with mutually different expectations. I remember that the first year of our living together we had a lot of intensive discussions making clear that anticipating the supposed expectations of your partner, leads to a lot of misunderstandings. We coped by sorting out our personal habits and expectations, and to negotiate about shared standards.

3.3 Defaults-genesis part II: a young lecturer on the move

In 1982 I started to work as a lecturer in philosophy at an Academy of Social Work. From 1982 until 1998 with great pleasure I lectured on social philosophy and ethics for students in Social Work, Occupational Therapy and Human Resource Management.

First six years

I came to work in a department with in my view very unprofessional ways of cooperating and communicating, low quality standards and intensive ideological battles. I sometimes felt like Alice in Wonderland. Although a junior lecturer within a year I became the substitute head of the department, because of showing a competence in leading meetings and sorting things out, and a kind of unusual directness for this environment. I suppose that I had the support of majority of the members of the department, who longed for policy-making of the department. For a short while my nickname became "Johnny Concrete". I was not afraid to enter into conflicts with colleagues, students and the management of the Academy.

If ever, there I learned to know the intricacy of communication and relations. Moreover I became disappointed in the professional competences of my colleagues. Differences in opinion were laid aside as a matter of ideology, thereby avoiding a critical professional debate. My expectations were probably high. I became aware of the fact that professional quality is depending on teamwork. Therefore I concluded you sometimes have to enforce cooperation if taking time to clarify misunderstandings does not help.

Although only from the midst of the eighties the Academy I worked was formally a UAS, its collegial culture was grafted in an academic tradition of professional autonomy. This tradition implies that the individual academic makes choices about the courses, the way courses are taught, and reflects privately on the quality of teaching (Monaghan, 2007). With hindsight I see that the academic cult value of professional autonomy was functionalized in an extremely relativistic way (Mead, 1923)

After six years of hot debates, often substituting the head of the department and being a chairman of all kinds of committees I made a switch towards more lecturing and reading. I was tired of all the discussions which were often an unparalleled mixture of prejudiced arguments in ideological or personal convictions being used. They mismatched with my rather rationalistic and analytical approach.

However, if I qualify myself as a rather rationalistic and analytical person I suppose at that time this also was a partial reaction on the ascribed irrationality of my colleagues. To survive possibly I overdeveloped a kind of detachment. Moreover, I came to learn that I am above average sensitive for what is happening during social interactions. Rational detachment still offers me a provision to escape the cannonade of impressions which submerges me in all kind of interactive situations.

Reading an account of heated discussions (O'Flynn, 2005), I cannot help reliving my experiences. I have developed an allergy for this kind of situations, which at its turn still stimulates my ability to sort out subjects in trying to stay focussed. I also realize that by acting this way I force other people to act rationally according to my standards. In younger years I did this because of my competence and a certain authority I gained. Later on also because of the power related to my position as a managing director.

Encapsulated in books and reflection

As a lecturer I read a lot, sometimes I published an article or a book. Apart from lecturing I was for example involved in the development of courseware for philosophy, in the introduction of the accreditation system in the UAS and in several projects for the improvement of our courses. Alongside my lectures I started to work on a PhD which was initiated through a curiosity for the conceptual similarities between cognitive sciences and the French post-structuralism. I sensed that cognitivism could offer a possibility of connecting the historical and power analysis of Foucault (1925 – 1984) with the tangible opinions of people. I never finished this PhD-project but I got trained in taking a historical and genetic position towards concepts of science and philosophy. Owing to reading the history of ideas in archaeology, evolution theory, psychology and biology and the history of technology I approach theories in the context of broad societal and scientific developments unwilling to isolate them as part of non-historical scientific or philosophical discourses. The life of scientists and the concepts of their science, in fact the life of every human being, are to be read as convergences of societal developments.

Because of my interpretation of Foucault (1975) emancipation had gained a radical but impossible notion of absolute freedom. Meddlesome interference of authorities, institutions or big companies was not acceptable. Privacy became canonized. A good illustration is the battle I fought with the staff members of the infant care of my daughter Sanne (born 1983). As parents we did not want that her dossier was handed over to the healthcare in the primary school, worried that early labels about her condition would influence evaluations later on in her life. Not used as the medical staff was to independent clients and convinced of their superior intentions, it took some discussions, but the dossier was emptied. One Big Brother down!

The first book I wrote is a reflection on the irrationality of human beings. The book was about the confrontations between social workers and clients, by deconstructing their discourses in a historical setting as an interaction in which all parties practice micro-power based on their different default assumptions (Simon, 1996). In the revised edition the strong power dimensions were replaced by a quasi-neutral cognitive way of explaining interactions (Simon, 2000). In the books I am focused on the pragmatic effects of language, as language is ingrained in history and regulates the way people interpret everyday life. Interaction is a matter of historical variation and socialization instead of rational decision making. Actually I did what was meant in my PhD-project

by connecting concepts of the cognitive sciences with concepts about epistemological order, micro-power, communication and interaction, by using Elias (1969), Foucault (1966), Minsky (1986) and Shotter (1993).

3.4 Defaults-genesis part III: becoming and being a manager

In 1998 I was urged to apply for the position of head of the department of social work. "Urged" is the right word because I was very ambivalent about becoming a manager. My hesitations were multiple.

Hesitations and ambivalence

First of all, I almost felt no affiliation with management. I had experienced some of my managers as hesitating in their decisions, unclear in their argumentation, ambiguous in their position and not showing inspiring leadership. To their advantage I should state that they had to manage in situations in which a lot of change was brought about in the Dutch Higher Education (textbox 1 in 1.1). Becoming a manager would mean that I would become a member of a largely unappreciated group in my organization.

A second hesitation was that becoming a manager would end my PhD-project. This project enriched my knowledge. At the same time it lacked focus and was a never ending story. Applying could be an excuse to stop it. I also found no inspiration in lecturing anymore, partly caused by myself. I had developed a didactic way of working in which students were very much engaged but I had made myself more or less redundant as a lecturer.

A third hesitation was that I had ample experience in managing teams. Although colleagues stated that they were happy with me as a project manager, I knew that being critical about management, does not imply that I would be a better manager. In my free time I had some experience as the President of the Board of a primary school and a member of the board of a university of life, but more or less managing in a board the policy of a manager is not the same as managing a team or a department.

A fourth hesitation had to do with the philosophy I lectured about. I was influenced by neo-Marxist thinkers like Habermas (born 1925) and heavily influenced by reading Foucault, Sloterdijk and Rorty (1931 – 2007). They write about the power of language and communication, the power of inequality or difference, and about the pervert character of our modern society. I asked myself if I should become part of perverting the education system. I remember having written an unpublished column with in the headline the question whether the dream of modularisation would bring forth monsters (paraphrasing the title of a painting of the Spanish painter Francisco Goya, which

he painted in 1779). For me modularisation of education stood as a symbol of disintegrating knowledge in favour of an instrumentalist approach of learning.

Summarized I had questions like: is it possible to manage people who were my colleagues the day before? What about my authenticity and becoming someone who I severely criticized before? What about my expertise on philosophy? Will I become an empty headed person who only cares for organizational questions and will I lose affinity with the job at hand?

I decided to apply because of a new appointed general manager in whom I had faith. Besides I was in need of a new fulfilment and was susceptible for the appreciation of my colleagues. I wanted to try to do it better than my predecessors. One event in my professional career was paramount for this decision. Once I asked the general manager of that time to develop together with me career opportunities so one day I would become an associate professor at our UAS. Within 30 seconds she decided that this was impossible and left me behind with empty hands. Regarding this event I supposed that it would be not difficult to be a better manager and it had a lot of influence on my managerial ambitions. Even if not asked, I would take care that colleagues would get chances to develop their professional careers.

A symbolic representation of my transition towards a management position was that on my first day as a manager two of my children (14 and 12 years at that time) presented me a necktie. At their age and after hearing my deliberations on the dining table they understood that a necktie was an appropriate symbol for the detached and representative aspects of my new position. However, also for the slightly oppressed feeling I had in entering my new position. It is important to note that I entered my management position in an ambivalent mood and I always kept some ambivalence in being a manager.

Starting in management

Due to the merger of UAS with another UAS, the pursued reduction of overhead and a good impression I made, in short time I became head of two departments. After that I became dean/managing director of the Faculty of Social Work. The good impression I made was based on me being able of involving many colleagues, being able of sorting out responsibilities in a transparent way and still keeping pace in the projects. As I worked in a relatively small faculty populated with colleagues whom I knew well, we worked as a team in which I was positioned to bring things to a close. In their reactions I experienced that as long as in the perception of my colleagues I acted honestly and transparently things went all right. I became aware of the tension that exists between personal and organizational interests, the impact of misjudgement if you navigate on the opinions of others, the importance of genuine communication, and the sandwich position you have as a manager between the board and the employees.

This sandwich position became tangible in the introduction of performance measurements, integrated management, vertical job differentiation, budgets and audits, as to improve efficiency and account for public expenditure. It is believed that these management instruments will improve the overall results of an organization. They belong to the philosophy of New Public Management (Karp and Helgø, 2008). However, professionals experience it as a way of introducing top down control, a token of their disqualification and a lot of bureaucratic hassle (Commissie Dijsselbloem, 2008; Commissie Leraren, 2007).

I never started to believe that planning and control could be the essential inspiration for professionals to develop themselves and to invest in the organization. Planning and control is an engineering approach of an organizational reality in which employees are seen as unities which easily reprogram themselves to adapt to new policies. In a column for the journal of the UAS I had given an early warning not to trust on this supposed self-programming. Realizing a new policy is a complicated thing.

Managing appeared to be navigating in an extensive field of interactions which all have a temporarily and shifting outcome. I tried to be a manager who wanted to inspire colleagues to undertake something new and to take some risks. I was busy tinkering on the organization by observing what happened, by creating patterns and relations among colleagues. Engagement was accomplished because of the partly unstructured way of working together and the joint possibility of reviewing concepts, methods and targets during the projects. I learned to have confidence in my colleagues and to plan and manage within broad perspectives.

Acting this way always felt as accomplishing something together with the team which at the very same moment I could not grasp. Working together took place intuitively, it inspired us and we cultivated better teams and an organization. What made it successful was not fully explainable. We evaluated on the basis of principles like responsibility, performance, teamwork and engagement but the evaluations were not the decisive thing. At the end I presented myself as a social constructionist, as someone who understands that an organization is the ongoing result of many spiders who weave in their own web in their own way. The webs sticking together is what we call an organization (Bruijns et al., 2004; Simon, 2004).

My self-presentation as a social constructionist was a bit of an idealized description of our efforts in the faculty to improve our courses and to obtain a higher position on the ranking lists of Dutch Higher Education. In reality it also had been hard work on settling discussions and heated debates about a lot of opinions of a lot of different persons. Sometimes colleagues had to be forced to comply with the innovation undertaken. Changing old and developing new default assumptions is an intensive business. I realize that my style of management was a convergence of my philosophical notions, a strong reaction on my experiences with former management, the fact that I had to manage colleagues and my personal opinions about authority.

The idealized description of social constructionism also served the purpose of presenting our department as successful. We showed that planning and control is not the beatific factor of success. Presenting this description was part of a political discussion about how to run a university other than by the institutionalized mistrust of audits, budget reports and critical performance indicators. However, I seldom discussed this with the board or my fellow managers because this approach did not fit into the dominating discourse of planning and control. Besides all the managers were searching for their own style in discussion with the ruling discourse and not in discussion with the discourse of a fellow junior manager.

A manager with potential

By the executive board I was perceived as a high potential, so new career opportunities became possible. I had grown dissatisfied with my position mostly because of the repetition in the work. In 2004 I was invited to apply for the position of dean/managing director of another faculty. The position concerned a newly merged faculty for information, communication and technology. I was honoured to be invited and choose for the new position. I was appointed after a selection procedure.

During my time in the new faculty the university intensified control by a detailed planning and control cycle. General programs about the educational ideology, human resource policy and cooperation with the market for education and research were established. A dean became fully responsible for his faculty. With the dictated absence of middle management I was directly responsible for the work and evaluations of around 100 employees. Furthermore I had to reduce a structural deficit of € 400.000 and to implement the policy of the UAS.

Six different departments and a centre of expertise with very different cultures and partly curtailed traditions in innovation were to be seduced to cooperating. I was expected to resolve old conflicts among colleagues which sometimes had lasted already for 20 years. Besides, I wanted to stimulate some old fashioned professionals to redefine themselves as someone else than a traditional lecturing teacher with a class of 20 students. Moreover, I wanted to break through the omnipresence of the not-invented-here-syndrome. I stood for an up-to-date organization with up-to-date members of staff.

Together with the heads of departments and in consultation with the working council we restructured the faculty into four departments. These departments became responsible for their budgets, the innovation of their courses and could have their own identity bound within the cooperation within the faculty. Moreover, I stimulated colleagues to start some kind of education again. I suppose we partly succeeded in these matters because of the engagement of the heads of the departments and as many as colleagues as possible in developing, communicating about and applying of transparent criteria for all sorts of policy. However, if this supposition is shared by my former colleagues I am not sure. My rather communicative approach may not have

connected with an engineering professional culture in which is assumed that equivocality is to be excluded.

My greatest deception was that I could not get all the members of staff in a development-oriented mode regarding educational philosophy or technology. I stumbled upon their firmly anchored educational and organizational default assumptions. Only a minority of the colleagues in some departments were in for educational or organizational innovation despite the fact that there was a lot of space to develop their own ideas. Partially colleagues explained their own unwillingness with the generally felt disqualification of the educational jobs in the Netherlands. Partially they were only focused on their traditional expertise and did not want to be bothered by other developments. And they experienced a high workload.

I relived one of my first experiences in Higher Education namely that professional autonomy had prolapsed into extreme subjectivity. Some colleagues of this faculty saw me as a representative of the board who had to shake up things and to cut their budgets. Also as someone who had no qualification on their field of expertise and therefore no authority to solve their problems. Was I a prototype of a manager who had lost contact with the educational job at hand? On the other hand questions arose about the way they were able to sustain their strong convictions and how some of them were able to give me a feeling of being excluded.

Tensions with the board turned up when I wanted to introduce a new policy of the UAS in an adapted way for my faculty. Being held responsible for my faculty I wanted to change things with my colleagues in a way which was feasible. Of course, I was stimulated by my experiences in the former faculty in which good cooperation and taking time delivered strong results. In the eyes of the board I was a bit elusive, not to fix to exact results and sometimes they doubted my loyalty.

3.5 Defaults-genesis part IV: director strategic programme

In the middle of 2007 I decided not to aim for a new appointment as dean/managing director of this faculty. Irrespective of my disappointments, I was fed up with all the planning and control thinking in which plans had become very important. In my experience facades were created instead of talking about things which really matter. Moreover, I got tired with the amount of changes; a colleague-dean of mine even spoke of innovation-terror. I also wanted to get away from a job with quite some ritualistic duties.

I felt that I was not the same person as before. In my own and in the experience of my colleagues I had become a Scrooge McDuck. Mainly busy with money, results and evaluations instead of stimulating a rich working environment and managing people. The felt ambivalence about being a manager which accompanied me at the start of

my career as a manager came back. Especially because some of my colleagues made me feel an empty headed money manager. I longed for some intellectual space to reflect on the experience that for change management the behaviour of human beings is crucial, different and very complicated. Before I got totally stuck I changed position.

Some of my new responsibilities

My new position came into being in a changed context. Sometime before the managers and the board had opted for an organization in which co-creation should get a chance instead of the regular top down approach. The choice for co-creation was a settlement of the years before. I assume that for the at that time appointed new President of the Board the choice for co-creation also was a possibility of developing good working relations with the managers. The concept of co-creation was loosely defined as doing things together with advice and influence of all parties. Advisory boards of managing directors for the board were established. Faculties were invited to form platforms of cooperation. As leaders of the UAS we wanted to bring about a learning organization, presumably fitting in the dominant organizational discourse at that time (Peters, 2009; Wierdsma, 2005).

In 2008 I became responsible for the design of the overall strategy of the UAS. Point of departure was that according to the new President of the Board the UAS had to be more aware of social developments which are or will become influential for Higher Education. In line with the propagated co-creativity I organized a process of developing our midterm strategy in which inside and outside stakeholders were invited to think with us about our future. As an input I developed four scenario's, together with the reassurance that the outcomes of the discussions were and would be undefined until the end of the project. This project came to be known as the wiki-project because alongside conferences, a blog, discussions and presentations I used a wiki as a medium for exchanging information and opinions (Simon, 2008).

I was inspired by the concept of the wisdom of the crowd (Tapscott and Williams, 2008). I worked within a social and economic definition of the concept in which is proclaimed that in this age of participation we should be aware that "winning in a world of co-creation and combinatorial innovation is all about building a loyal base of innovators that make your ecosystem stronger, more dynamic, and more expedient than the ecosystems of rivals in creating new value for customers. To achieve this, your organization - regardless of the sector or line of business - needs to identify and open up platforms to enable mass collaboration." (Tapscott and Williams, 2008: 210). My project aimed at cooperation, acceptance and loyalty regarding the new strategy.

The result was a 4 year-strategy with which a lot of managers and colleagues identify themselves, at least in a way that they could recognize their main concerns in the strategy. The focus of the strategy was on the core business (education and developing research) and not on some fancy futuristic perspective.

However, I realize that the broad support for the strategy is no guarantee for its realization. I still had questions, amongst others provoked by the lack of results of the preceding strategy. Will the new strategy be realized because it is developed according to the principles of the wisdom of the crowd and for that reason lacking the sharp difference between design and implementation? Or will it be realized because its objectives are formulated in accessible language and where the four main objectives are converted into activities which are close to business as usual? And what will really be changed? I even ask myself if a prescribed general strategy is needed or possible, given that societal developments are different as foreseen and therefore a strategy always limps. Why should an organization ever need a strategy? And if, what kind of strategy should that be?

Alongside the wiki project I became engaged as an adviser for our bureau for communication. In 2009 we started a project on internal and external branding. A high ranking UAS with a lot of ambitions had to do better on presenting itself. It should have a recognizable identity in working together. For this project we hired a consulting company. Together with the consultants from that company we started a programme in which we revised the architecture of our brand and in which we tried to stimulate that everyone became inspired and recognized by our brand identity. A strong brand pays off (Eck et al., 2008; Riel, 2003). In line with the propagated co-creativity the programme was also designed in such a way that all our faculties and offices became responsible themselves for introducing and implementing the internal branding. If wished they could be supported by the consultants of the company. The new brand was distilled from an analysis of our results, our evaluations, our way of acting and marketing, and our way of talking about ourselves. Meetings with the board, managing directors, associate professors, communication officers and employees supported this analysis.

Despite that bottom up analysis, revising the architecture of the brand and stimulating a common ground for our identity has proven to be a touchy subject. It also proved to be an assignment with which managers felt themselves unfamiliar. The reception of the programme was very different throughout the UAS. In general our offices and four out of twenty faculties were enthusiastic, around five faculties more or less ignored the programme and around ten faculties did something about it, but at a lingering pace.

At the very moment of writing this narrative for me the question regarding this programme is what will be realized if I will look back in a couple of years? My hypothesis is that the outcomes will be something else than designed and intended and it is interesting to know what is really happening in programmes like this. I experience that outlines are changing, that the way the programme is managed is shifting and that compromises are sought. Given my convictions I even stimulate adaptation to what is perceived as possible. However, at the same time I wonder if the proclaimed wisdom of the crowd – by involving many members of staff in the discussions during the

programme - will equal the many and sometimes radical developments which at a high rate overflow Higher Education. I ask myself how to stand for and to organize some sort of wisdom of the crowd in such a way that wisdom, tempo, identification, responsibility and good results are to be secured at the same time.

3.6 A wavering UAS: a context for my research

I summarize what I see as the actual state of affairs of the UAS. This state of affairs serves as the context for my research, at least as a start of my research-process. This state explains what at the moment of this writing I perceive as questions and problems with what the UAS is faced.

Looking back I see that apparently around 2008-2009 something changed in the UAS. At least there was an attempt to use a more bottom up approach to strategic and organizational questions. Apart from the way the wiki-project was organized there were more initiatives which pointed in the direction of what at that time was signified with co-creativity. The establishment of advisory-boards of managing directors has been mentioned. Another initiative was the establishment of a working group of lecturers to advice about the reassessment of the position of the lecturing and research professionals in the UAS. The establishment of platforms to foster cooperation among faculties, and faculties and offices was another initiative. Also the design of the branding-project possessed a strong flavour of co-creativity.

However, an intended reshuffling of the faculties and research centres which at the moment of this writing is being discussed, is presented by the board with a rather detailed blueprint presented. This reshuffling will have a great impact for a lot of employees. Bigger faculties, less senior management, integration of research and education into one framework and a new hierarchy between management, associate professors and the board are the main themes. The detailed character of the blueprint, a bit of an awkward way of communicating about it, the proposed short time of discussing and deciding, and the impact of the consequences produces quite some rumour and is not interpreted by everyone as a co-creative effort.

More questions to ask than answers to give

At the time of writing this narrative it is not unequivocal anymore for me why a turn-around towards co-creativity was propagated. I have quite some questions. Was it because of a new president? Was it the expression of important societal developments in which the position of teachers and education in the Netherlands evolved (Commissie Dijsselbloem, 2008; Commissie Leraren, 2007)? Or was it the outcome of an internal long lasting underground process in which at last the beacons of power were shifted towards the faculties? Or did the necessary functionality of planning and control after the merger expire and allow the UAS to take its own former thread of narrative? Or was it a necessary development, needed to take the next step towards

the realization of the UAS as a learning organization (Simon and Ploeg, 2009)? And what was exactly meant when we were busy with this change? Did we have or develop some common purposes and vision in doing this or is our relatively success dependent on not defining a common vision too strict? And how does this change correspond with the planning and control approach dominant in many years and the success the UAS has according to its ranking and the almost general high work satisfaction? Or are we an organization which only muddles through with no common perspective needed? Or are we cleverly adapting to whatever is the newspeak in the headlines of the journals, of the governmental policy or gurus of organization development? What are the stories within the UAS which explain what we are doing and how we succeed and fail in accomplishing things? In general an interesting question is which narratives were composed for which particular audience at which particular moment and on what taken-for-granted-discourses and values in which particular culture did these narratives draw (Kohler Riessman, 2008).

For this moment I conclude that UAS has not yet fulfilled its promises regarding co-creativity it intended. The UAS seems to waver between a thrifty elaborated ideal of co-creativity and bottom up thinking, and old habits of top down, hastiness, supposed external pressure and blue print-approaches. There is no common frame of reference to evaluate what and how the UAS is developing and implementing policy. A question is whether a common frame is necessary and if so possible, or if the battle between the co-creative and top down-discourses will go on forever?

I conclude that my experiences in management and the design of policy are susceptible for different explanations. I started with a strong statement about my paradigm as a reflection of what I have learned, but my statement suggests too much that it is a coherent and well-founded way of thinking. I come to understand my paradigm is a hybrid and loosely coupled compilation of different arguments, interpretations and experiences. On a theoretical level my paradigm is not consistent and on a practical level it is ambiguous. Therefore questions about policy development in which the wisdom of the crowd should play a part, have a theoretical and practical relevance. Doing research on the justifiability of my paradigm should indicate ways towards more consistency and un-ambiguity.

The questions and my ideas about my research

At this moment I see the many questions as stated above and condensed in what I call wavering between a bottom up and a top down approach of 'doing policy' as the context to start my research. The questions point to my experiences and perceptions of my work, and the way I problematize my work and in what direction I am looking for solutions at this moment.

I see my research as motivated by a fourfold curiosity. First, I am curious about what is happening before and during periods of profound change and what to learn from this reality check. It is a curiosity about how a 'real reality' is constructed during the pro-

cess of change instead of the 'wished for reality'. Second, given my convictions I want to reflect on how to organize change processes in which the wisdom of the crowd, the needed tempo, the crucial feelings of identification and responsibility, and results are secured. Third, in a theoretical sense I am curious how the focus on default assumptions changes the way I will reflect on change process. Despite the inherent present cognitivism and hermit-like connotations of a concept as default assumptions I am curious about this 'me'-side of interaction. Fourth, because I state that my paradigm is a hybrid and loosely coupled compilation of different kinds of arguments, interpretations and experiences, I hope that more consistency can be achieved.

From my current insights reflecting on this wish for consistency I would say that basically this wish for consistency is a natural psychological phenomenon by which human beings try to get a grip on their environment. "The situation out of which the difficulty, the problem, springs is a lack of adjustment between the individual and his world. The response does not answer to the demands which gave the stimulus its power over the organism." (Mead, 1938: 6). On a neurological level the body tries to solve inconsistencies by filling in: "... the brain automatically infers aspects of the stimulus that are missing and presents these as a fully elaborated percept." (Koch, 2004: 23). Experienced inconsistency leads to uncertainty and insecurity, which in their turn lead to reflection and action to resolve the inconsistencies. On the level of human interaction consistency is associated with reliability, authenticity and identity. On a theoretical or scientific level consistency is associated with reliability and validity, thus with standards of quality and authority of the explanations. All together consistency has something to do with the possibilities of predicting and controlling one's environment and with being predictable and controllable for one's environment. Without it the world would be perceived as a constantly and rapidly changing environment in which great uncertainty and insecurity would rule. Longing for more consistency is a longing for more predictability. In one of the projects I intend to reflect on the processing of differences as the engine of social reality.

Research on a concept as the wisdom of the crowd, my preoccupation with the concept of default assumptions together with my longing for consistency, incorporates a flirting seduction to approach human beings as controlling and controlled beings. The symbiosis of controlling and being controlled I can leave behind by replacing it by concepts of interaction and connectivity. For the present this replacement is based on logical and strategic considerations, due to the supposed greater effectiveness of the wisdom of the crowd. If the logic of human interconnectedness will lead me to an ethics of care and responsibility (Burkitt, 1999) is an open question.

It would be fascinating to satisfy my curiosity in doing some research around important questions regarding the wavering status of the UAS. How the actors did experience the years 2008 -2009 as transition years and how do they explain this transition? How do they qualify the actual status of this transition? Did or do they want to realize a co-creative organization? Or did they just pay lip service to a loosely defined concept

just to proceed the way they always proceeded? What kind of organization do these actors want to be and how can this be accomplished? If I look back at the recent wiki and branding-projects which I organized partly in line with my own convictions, I wonder whether other actors involved will have the same or quite different explanations of what is or should be happening and had quite some other reasons to participate. And if so, what does that mean for my convictions, for the way I will organize projects or for my advices regarding projects in the future?

On a theoretical level, momentarily questions arise if and how the wisdom of the crowd is to be reflected from the perspective of a complex responsive process-approach? Or by asking the question if a process of organizing the wisdom of the crowd has some resemblance with a complexity perspective in which producing synergy in a complex situation is a theme (Zuijderhoudt, 2007).

3.7 Exploring the kinship between a complex responsive process-approach and the concept of the wisdom of the crowd

A broad exploration of the supposed kinship between the concept of the wisdom of the crowd and a complex responsive process-approach will offer me some clarification if my intended research has some or enough connections with a complex responsive process-approach. It will also clarify whether there is sufficient affinity between my defaults and a complex responsive process-approach to pursue my research within the Complexity Group.

The use of a wiki and with it the associations of the concept of the wisdom of the crowd canalized a lot of my default assumptions regarding co-creation, emergence, framing, commitment, micro-power, communication and language. Wisdom of the crowd as a concept is connected with communication through the interactive possibilities of the new media. Wisdom of the crowd is a concept in which it is proclaimed that by sharing information and all kinds of expertise in a non-hierarchical way an effective solution for problems is constructed and of the possibility of democratizing the policy of companies, organizations and government. Of course political issues arise about for example the supposed expertise of participants, about the levelling down of traditional professional expertise and cultural leadership, and about the real and practical conditions of participation. The wisdom of the crowd includes the same ideological discussions and power games as everywhere else where human beings are depending on each other.

At the time of my wiki-project I was aware of different dimensions in the project. The wiki-project embedded an interpretation of co-creation through which every stakeholder would have the opportunity of being co-responsible for the strategy (Wierdsma, 2005). The project also possessed an instrumental dimension in which was taken into account that by involving everyone, everyone would be committed to the outco-

me. Implementation of the new strategy would become an extension of the process. From a power perspective a wiki is a panoptical instrument, a technology by which the user is aware of being watched and therefore complies to the situation (Foucault, 1975). I also took into account that differences in points of view would not become too big because we all are in the same swarm (Christakis and Fowler, 2010; Ginneken, 2009). But in principle I was prepared to deal with an unpredicted outcome of the wiki-project and I had no intention of controlling the discussion, nor had the executive board of the UAS.

However, I realize that acting human beings never know in reality what the accumulation of their acting will signify. In stating this it sounds as if I interpret the acts of human beings as fractals composing a new synergy. For me this orientation on human beings is based on the concept of *epistémè* of Foucault (1966). An *epistémè* is described as a certain period in time, in which reality is interpreted according to an evolved set of signifiers. With some restrictions regarding the historical scale an *epistémè* can be compared with the concept of a social object of Mead, because in the social interactions objects are constituted by which a number of people start to act in certain way. "Organic processes or responses in a sense constitute the objects to which they are responses." (Mead, 1934: 77).

Based on the work of Foucault I feel comfortable with a concept of power which practice is located in everyday interactions, including the battle with dominant discourses or as Stacey would call them second order abstractions (Stacey, 2010). For the way the discourses in our society are formed and prolonged Foucault speaks of micro-power strategies, by which the interpretations of the situations are conditioned. If the wisdom of the crowd is practised, micro-power is there in words, revision and coalitions.

To summarize the kinship as supposed by me between a complex responsive process-approach and the concept of the wisdom of the crowd as interpreted by me has ideological, theoretical and practical dimensions. The idealizations about human beings within a complex responsive process-approach can be described as an actionist, communicative (dialogical and reciprocal) and pragmatist's orientation on human beings. My interpretation and dealing with the wisdom of the crowd corresponds with these idealizations by emphasizing accepted truth as a result of conversation, in which human beings deal with each other as part of an ongoing process. Theoretically the kinship is based on the similarities between the central concepts of a complex responsive process-approach and the concepts which I derived from philosophy, neuropsychology, symbolic interactionism and language-analysis.

In a practical sense the kinship is based on the fact that in day to day conversation human reality emerges and changes, and that every participant contributes – whether conscious or not – to what is happening. In this respect the wisdom of the crowd rules, even if one thinks that this is not wise.

Pursuing my research?

On a conceptual level I concluded that there was sufficient affinity between my defaults and a complex responsive process-approach to pursue my research from a complex responsive process-perspective. However, that was rather an intuitive than rational decision. I became convinced that there was something to gain in the understanding of my practice. At the start the affinity was not evident for me. As indicated in chapter 1 I had a lot of questions regarding 'doing policy' and a colleague suggested me to start a PhD in the graduate school of the Open University. Maybe I could find some answers. After my admission for the PhD-programme I was directed to the Complexity Group, apparently based on my intake and my shown interest in the work of Homan (2005). That after a year of working I wanted to pursue my research within this group and approach had not been my plan beforehand. Serendipity?

3.8 Reflections in hindsight

After three years reading back my first narrative - which was meant to clarify my taken for granted assumptions about the way I reflect upon myself as a professional and the organization I work for - I see myself as someone who reflected and acted on a fuzzy mixture of different perspectives on life, work or management. To explain what I did and why I fell back on organismic notions, fed by my Romanticism, inspired by the concepts of co-creation and wisdom of the crowd. Moreover, I fell back on a kind of cognitivism in which routines or default assumptions should be changed, on a kind of historic and social determinism where organizations and individuals should adapt to, and on a rather instrumental opinion of management. At that time factually I gave a manager, and thus myself in that role, a lot of instrumental responsibility for what is happening, for controlling what is happening, even for the way people feel involved. Although now I think differently, at that time apparently I saw a manager as positioned above instead as part of the daily muddle. This stance is also recognisable in the way I reflected upon myself: an assemblage of defaults which apparently can be 'switched on and off'.

This fuzzy mixture of different perspectives apparently was held upright by a deeply ingrained anti-authoritarian relation with my fellow human beings and more specific managers. I wanted to decide for myself what is good for me. Of course this will have to do with the preferred status of a professional (Wanrooy, 2007), but also with me being raised in the 1970s amidst all the emancipatory developments.

However, this fuzzy mixture also proofed to become an obstacle. The obstacle I experienced is beautifully put into words by Alvesson and Sköldböck (2009: 58): "the risk with too much book-learning is to become over-dependent on earlier authorities and tangled up in all the old problems, so that it becomes difficult to see new possibilities."

Together the elements of the mixture suggest an explanation for the ongoing ambivalence about how I was acting in my work at the start of my research. Basically I was inspired by the wish to involve people as much as possible, practically charged with a lot of responsibilities and reflexively observing that things turned out differently. However, I also notice that I was focussed on social interactions, communication and on stimulating cooperation. I was interested in what people do when accomplishing something together.

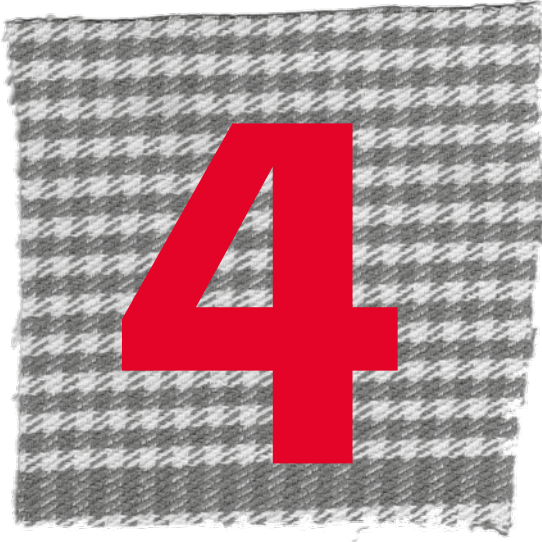
At the start what I would be doing for my research was explored and still wide and open. I entered my research with the idea of doing research into co-creativity related to using the wisdom of the crowd. At that time it was meant to flow into an idea how institutional strategy could be developed in a participative way based on among others recent insights in neurological sciences. However, getting acquainted with a complex responsive process-perspective, almost instantly I started to sense that co-creativity and wisdom of the crowds is always there, but in quite another fashion than I assumed. In the way I came to learn that 'wisdom' emerges in social interaction, also my research themes and questions started to change and other themes emerged.

In what follows it will become clear that my reflection upon and the confrontation of a complex responsive process-approach with my existing co-creative orientations - which of course were entangled with my former beliefs and experiences - have led me towards other and new orientations on what is happening in the UAS, what my job is and what might (not) be done. To anticipate: the more or less utopian - or maybe patronizing - assumptions within a co-creative approach or within a concept like the wisdom of the crowds will be traded in for concepts like unpredictability, uncertainty, modesty and being reticent about the possibilities of planned reform of education.

The way I got acquainted with a complex responsive process-approach is to be noticed in this first narrative. Predominantly I use ideas of Mead and Stacey to connect them to my way of thinking in a rather analytical and book smart way. Mostly I used the work of Mead and Stacey to support what I was thinking, and not the other way around. I came to experience that my book smartness - endless I was called - proofed to be quite an obstacle to grasp the value of a complex responsive process-approach. I came to learn quite some lessons.

In my description of my taken for granted assumptions I also recognize what within auto-ethnography is labelled as the importance of epiphanies (Denzin, 2014). I realize that I reconstructed my history with the help of meaningful biographical events. In my case for instance with the help of the hypocrite priest or the manager who decided about my future with the speed of light.

Being more aware of my taken for granted assumptions I started to narrate on some of my experiences in my work. The first and next narrative is about a project regarding identity-management.



Sense making in and of the internal branding project

This narrative is about what happened during a period of four months (September – December 2011) in the deliberations of a coordination team about an evaluation of the results of an internal branding programme (see 4.1). The narrative as such was written between September 2011 and September 2012. The narrative is followed by some analytical and reflexive orientations on shifts in the way the evaluation of the internal branding programme was interpreted (see 4.2 and 4.3), on what happens during the four months of working together in this specific coordination team (see 4.4. and 4.5), and on my role as the manager of the branding programme and an adviser to the board (see 4.6 up till 4.8). The analytical and reflexive orientations on this narrative are presented in their 6th version.

The narrative is an account about what happened from interpreting the first draft of an evaluation report up till the conclusions drawn after the presentation of the report to the executive board, and the circulation of the report throughout the UAS. I focus on how interactions between participants writing and commenting on the report change first and later interpretations of the report, interpretations which become condensed in the conclusions and recommendations to the executive board of the UAS.

I approach the drawing up of a summary and the formulating of conclusions as potentially rather influential in what happens afterwards. To my experience principals often read only summaries and conclusions. A summary and conclusions thus may have great influence on the decisions afterwards. The deliberations amongst the members of the coordination team therefore can be seen as micro-politics with potentially institutional consequences.

The internal branding programme

Formally the internal branding programme ran from 2009 up till 2013. In 2009 the President of the Board and the then head of the office of communications had concluded that our policy regarding marketing and communications needed modernization. Eight years after the merger which founded the UAS, their conclusions were that our brand architecture was a mess. Jointly they concluded that given the size of the organization our efforts on marketing and communications were of a low standard and our corporate identity was diffuse.

A commercial company which connected identity-management and human resource policy into 'internal branding' was contracted (Eck et al., 2008). Together with the company an internal branding-programme was designed. The programme was managed by a project-manager for the practical organization, a coordination team for developing and coordination of the programme and an advisory committee of a dean, an associate professor and a head of an office, presided by the President of the Board.

Being aware that identity was a touchy subject, the point of departure was to involve as many as possible representatives of faculties and offices in discussions concerning

the programme. Analyses of our websites and other communication media, and intensive discussions clarified what our core values proved to be.

During the years 2009 – 2011 the programme aimed at enhancing awareness and conscious application of the core values. Eye-catching actions were organized to get attention for the core values. Support was organized for teams who wanted to start working with the core values. A redesign of our brand-architecture was realized.

Evaluation report of the programme

On the 12th September 2011 Inez Reker (our institutional researcher) send the coordination team of the programme a first, incomplete report concerning an internal evaluation about the state of affairs of the internal branding programme of the UAS. On the 7th October 2011 Reker presented her final report to the coordination team, accompanied with a management summary and her conclusions (Reker, 2011).

Her evaluation was focussed on the question how our employees experience the presence of the core values (initially: brand values) of the UAS. The core values are: ambitious, professionalism, enterprising, open and inspiring. These values are seen as the hard core of our organizational identity, supposing to give a distinctive quality to our members of staff and students.

The core values were made explicit and organization-wide introduced in 2009. The decision to evaluate the branding programme was taken in March 2011. The evaluation served different interests. The contracted company advocated evaluations to be able to prove the results of their efforts. The members of the board supported an evaluation to legitimize granting follow up budgets for the programme. The report was presented to the executive board of the UAS (15th November 2011), accompanied with conclusions and recommendations of the coordination team. The 21st December the report was circulated in the UAS to the deans, associate professors and directors.

The coordination team consisted of Marc Claassen, the director marketing and communication, Henk Rademakers, the director human resources, Cees Corte, a partner of the contracted commercial company and me as the responsible programme manager. The coordination team reported to the executive board.

Deliberations within the coordination team, which were needed to draw conclusions and to give recommendations regarding the evaluation report, took place in formal meetings (face to face in an arranged setting), e-mail and informal conversations (accidental face to face and by telephone). Being the programme manager I was responsible for encouraging and organizing these deliberations.

This chapter contains the narrative of what happened during the deliberations in the coordination team, followed by a description of the shifts in interpretation which evolved during the deliberations. I assume that readers are familiar enough with

evaluation reports, that they can understand where the discussions are about, without reading the evaluation report.

In my narrative I give a sketch of the processes in which our final policy document for the executive board is produced, leading to themes for further reflection. A more profound reflection on what happens during the deliberations is undertaken thereafter. I continue with a reflection from what I understood at that time of a complex responsive process-perspective on what happens in a process of developing institutional policy. What I started to learn about my position as an adviser to the board will be the subject of the last paragraph of my narrative.

4.1 From the first draft to final conclusions and recommendations

From the first draft to the final report

The step from the first draft of the evaluation report to the third, final report took four weeks in which the first and second draft of the report was discussed mostly between Inez Reker, Cees Corte and me. This discussion largely went by e-mail. All the e-mail is sent by and to Inez Reker, Cees Corte, Marc Claassen, Henk Rademakers and me. The result of this period was the third and final draft, which was the formal object of the first meeting of the coordination team regarding this report. Discussion by e-mail implicated that communication was done in a rather precise formulated way, at least for my part because I know how easy e-mailed communication can lead to misunderstandings.

On the first incomplete draft of Inez Reker I reacted by putting questions and remarks in the text and sending them Inez Reker, Cees Corte, Marc Claassen and Henk Rademakers. My first remarks regarded different points:

- we should talk about core values instead of brand values,
- a technical correction of the percentage of employees who were familiar with the core values from 55,4 to 76,8%
- the suggestion that the used category 'neutral' should be interpreted as an affirmative score instead of a score for indifference,
- I asked attention for the fact that the results showed that between the employees and the managers of the UAS there was a gap in understanding and in giving significance to the core values.

My first three remarks were rather technical, based on what we had agreed upon earlier and on close reading of the report. The last remark was rather political, because I wanted to emphasize that in my opinion this kind of change-programmes are rather pretentious in their goals but quite ineffective in their overall results. And I realized that the more the conclusions would suppress this difference the less the potential of this programme at all would be.

In accidental meetings with Inez Reker, Cees Corte and Marc Claassen I put my findings also forward, but Cees Corte and Marc Claassen still had to read the report. As the programme manager I felt it my responsibility to initiate discussions, but I also wanted to influence the discussion with regard to my remarks. Cees Corte reacted by asking questions about technical and statistical details of the report, by asking for attention for the Net Promoter Score (NPS), which was very positive. NPS is a metric which measures loyalty between an organization and an employer of customer. Corte more or less acknowledged that there were differences between employees and managers in signifying the values. I understood Corte's hesitations because my interpretation implicated a criticism on his model.

In the second draft Inez Reker corrected a part of her findings: percentage, core values but not her neutral categorizing. In the summary of the report she pulled a remarkable conclusion: to her opinion the programme had not succeeded in its objective of internalization of the core values by the employees. Furthermore she endorsed that there were differences between managers and employees in the significance given to the values.

On this second draft I reacted – again immediately - with a memo to the coordination team. I put forward doubt about the usability of the used branding-model and pointed to the early mentioned differences between employees and managers, the differences in scores among schools, faculties and offices. I advised to be restraint regarding an internalization approach as the next step. In this way I enervated Inez Reker's remarks about the failure of internalization of the values. Thereafter I kept the subject off the agenda. Nobody noticed it or apparently thought otherwise. A not unexpected quick reaction of Cees Corte on my memo followed: his model was appropriate. I reacted by stating that I had not wanted to discuss the model, but wanted to emphasize that we should see things in its context and not in terms of a model. A more elaborated reaction of Cees Corte added that we should think about the next step in the programme in which a conscious application of the core values throughout the university should become the main issue. He asked again for attention for the NPS.

After the above mentioned 'electronic' discussions Inez Reker presented a final report. In her summary amongst others she paid attention to the fact that the success of the programme is restricted and should lead to reconsidering the way it is managed, she maintained the neutral category, paid attention to NPS as having a very positive score and specified the schools and faculties where the amount of criticasters of the core values was high.

From the final report to the presentation for the board

Cees Corte was quick in sending a first draft of conclusions and recommendations before the meeting of the coordination team. In general his conclusions corresponded with the discussions before. In his reaction quite some critical remarks about management and about overambitious policy were made. I doubted if we should or could

publish these findings in this way, but we never discussed it. In between we agreed that the report and conclusions could be informally discussed in already arranged meetings with managers and the board. We did not want to be secretive about the results, although we made the restriction that these conclusions were preliminary. Before the meeting I stipulated by e-mail that we agreed to speak about core values, and that there are differences in making sense of the core values between employees individually and the managers. I thought this of importance to prevent a possible interpretation that a high familiarity with the values meant that everybody felt the same way. We discussed the same topic in the meeting of the coordination team. I supposed that Cees Corte wanted to report positive results of their efforts. For me it was important to show that although nominally 77 % agreed upon knowing the values, there still was a loose identification of the professional with the organization as such. I did not want to advance illusions about artificial general avowal. During the meeting we agreed upon a formula in which differences are acknowledged within a surprisingly high familiarity with the core values. With malicious fun all of us had examples of how we acknowledge the values, but practice something else. For instance a core value is openness, but in practice many procedures start from distrust regarding the honesty and dedication of members of staff.

After the meeting Cees Corte and I edited the text by replacing evocative and too technical terms. For instance a statement as 'a general manifest attitude' was replaced through 'an often pointed out attitude' to reduce the implicated bias of the first. We knew that ill-chosen terms would bring about un-prolific reactions. The edited version was sent to the board. Before the presentation in the board I discussed the main issues with the President of the Board, to inform him as the member of the board responsible for this programme.

My purpose was to sustain conversations about the identity of the UAS in any form and not to foreclose discussions. I thought it important that people keep on talking on who we are or should be. Beforehand Cees Corte and I had the idea to introduce the idea of open conversations; the up till then used term cascade-conversations appeared to be ill chosen because of its suggestion of top down interventions. For me open conversations were a way of introducing elements of unpredictability in the organization. Anything should be talked over with maybe surprising effects.

From the presentation to the final conclusions and recommendations

The meeting with the board was in two ways important to us as the coordination team. First the board should (re)identify with the programme and validate our conclusions and recommendations, formally to be supported by a decision which would be made public in the organization. Second the conclusions and recommendations should be integrated into other policy, for instance in the human resources-policy. For the coordination team working towards and starting from this meeting was decisive for further actions. This way of working matched our regular way of working: our executive board is the alpha and omega of formal policy.

The members of the board confirmed our conclusions and recommendations. They especially acknowledged the importance of the core values as the cornerstone of all the policy, including an intended new management development programme for team leaders. The members of the board intended to fulfil a role in the planned programme especially in regard with the core values. Remarkable in every discussion regarding the internal branding-programme was that the members also reflected on their own acting and realized they were not always alert in connecting their policy with the core values. An insight I don't forget to remind them off if this happens. As a result of the discussions we got our funding.

Before the next formal meeting of the coordination team Cees Corte and I discussed the outcomes of the meeting with the board separately with Henk Rademakers and Marc Claassen. Because it was Henk Rademakers' job to develop the programme for management development we talked this over with him. Until then he had been hesitating – and to his own saying formally unable – to take the core values explicitly as the point of departure of human resources-policy. According to him our collective labour agreement excluded a human resources-policy based on core values, for instance regarding performance evaluations. Given the conclusions of the board Henk Rademakers agreed to do this from now on. We talked with Marc Claassen because it is important that our way of marketing and communication becomes more a reflection of the core values. Cees Corte and I emphasized that an inspiring story about who we are and what we want should be expressed in our communication.

The formal meeting of the coordination team was more or less a formality. We agreed upon the final draft of the conclusions and recommendations. On the 21st December the President of the Board sent the report with the conclusions and recommendations to all the deans, directors and associate professors of the UAS. In his cover e-mail (for the greater part written by me) he stipulated the importance of the programme, his pleasure in working in an organization which is value driven and he reminded everybody that the discussion around core values already had a long history, started in management development programmes many years before and now coming of age. In between the formal meeting of the coordination team and the 21st of December Cees Corte and I had done the final editing on the text of the conclusions and recommendations. As we did before we removed potentially evocative terms.

4.2 Evolved shifts in conclusions and recommendations regarding the evaluation report

The foregoing narrative is my description what happened in the four months from the first up till third draft of the evaluation report about the results of an internal-branding programme. It is a description about what happens in preparing conclusions and recommendations for the board. As such it is a description of a micro-political process in which a document is produced which is meant for organization-wide use. Instead of

focussing at the outcome and speculating about the consequences of this document, I try to understand and to reflect upon what happened in preparing the document.

I see that in four months shifts evolved in the conclusions and recommendations due to interactions among the members of the coordination team, and partly due to interactions with the institutional researcher and members of the executive board. Some shifts may have a great impact, but most of all for me the shifts clarify what seemed to be important to worry about. The shifts, which came about selecting and ignoring subjects, also clarify how issues are sorted before they are discussed with the members of the board and finally are circulated to others. Moreover, the shifts point to the different interests of the people involved and how these interests become real in the conclusions and recommendations. The shifts express the micro-political process the coordination team passed through.

One shift occurred from brand values to core values. This shift implicates that the values became interpreted as a normative frame which is or should be part of the identity of our employees. Brand values are only instrumental features of marketing. This shift is a reconfirmation of earlier discussions in which we decided to speak of core values, although this was never formally decided neither by the coordination team nor the board. This transfer was presented as evident and the presentation of the value scan presented an opportunity to formalize this transfer by the way. I discussed it with Inez Reker and later on with Cees Corte and from that moment we started using core values as concept. Marc Claassen and Henk Rademakers agreed to that. By doing this we explicitly reconnected the results of the evaluation to the premise of the selected branding-model because this model proclaims that self-examination is the cornerstone of branding (Eck et al., 2008). Values should be an expression of what you do and who you are instead of who you want (to suggest) to be. The broad self-examination with which this programme had started in 2009, had underlined this premise.

Consequential is a shift from Inez Reker's interpretation of a neutral appreciation of the core values by the employees, towards our interpretation in which is stated that employees underscore the core values. It is a shift in which a transition is made from a high level of indifference of employees towards acknowledgement. The discussion on this took place between especially Inez Reker and Cees Corte. For Cees Corte it was clear that the category neutral meant that the employees were familiar with the core values. Cees Corte realized that the limit values of our core values, which we had defined for what we did not want to be (e.g. informing or pedantic instead of inspiring) should not have been measured in a Likert-scale as if they were the under and upper side of the core values. Marc Claassen, Henk Rademakers and I agreed to that, so unilaterally we put aside a great deal of the conclusions of Inez Reker. I supposed that for Cees Corte this methodological correction was also a matter of getting acknowledged that the branding programme had real impact. In a later conversation he convinced me that his real concern was about the flaw in the research design. In the

conclusions of the coordination team the apparent neutrality was removed. Inez Reker, rather indifferently for our alternation, maintained her interpretation in the report. Inez really took the role of the disentangled and objective researcher who does not interfere in her data.

We discussed the way we had to interpret the 'ownership' of the values. We wavered in an interpretation in which the core values alternately appeared to be experienced as personal characteristics, as one of the many ambitions of the management, or as something for the employees that comes from elsewhere (the team, faculty, the UAS). At the end we concluded that management and employees live in different realities. At first I discussed this with Inez Reker, as this reality difference was my interpretation of the preliminary and later versions of the report. I searched for her confirmation. In a memo of 27th September to the coordination team I emphasized the existence of different realities. Cees Corte stressed the fact that this difference was not apparent regarding the familiarity with the core values. In the formal meeting of the 26th October we concluded that both things were true: familiarity and different realities, meaning that everybody uses the same words but in practice experiences something different. Marc Claassen saw this difference in the way communication from the management to the employees is practised. For instance the board communicates its decisions in a rather detached language, coupled with more or less public evaluations of the proposals, and supposes that the consequences of the decisions are clear to everybody when the communication is done. Communication by the board is done from a perspective of openness but experienced by employees as formal and closed.

Another shift is to be noticed from an internalization approach in which employees are seen as objects to be changed, towards an approach in which open conversations are introduced as a way of discussing all kind of concerns. The internalization approach of Inez Reker was not seriously discussed. The shift towards open conversations was already discussed before the publication of the report. After the meeting with the board the conversational approach became to be seen as a way of stimulating an open and inspiring working environment. For Marc Claassen the emphasis was upon the possibility of reciprocal communication. For Cees Corte open conversations have become the most important way he sees possibilities of attaching the core values firmly to the acting of our employees. Henk Rademakers saw a connection with becoming an excelling organization, in line with the results of earlier done research into labour satisfaction of our employees (Toetenel and Voogt, 2010). I felt happy because I strongly belief in a conversational approach for successful working together. In former meetings with Cees Corte I had introduced the concept of a conversational approach for development and this was now formally accepted as a boost for organizational development.

4.3 Emerging themes of reflection

The writing of the narrative, the discussing of and the reflecting on the narrative in the learning group, and reading literature which appeared to be relevant, enabled me to discern several themes with regard to the micro-political efforts in the coordination team.

Looking back at the deliberations and the shifts I could say that we managed to reach satisfying results for ourselves and for the members of the board. The programme could be continued. The members of the board were satisfied and identified with the conclusions and recommendations. The members of the coordination team reached an agreement and work could be done.

In my reflections my musings on how things evolved in the internal programme play a role in the background. The development of this programme up till now shows that we never realized what we planned for the programme. Things always developed in another way than planned. I suppose that as members of the coordination team we share the experience that this happens all the time and that we learned to adapt to what really happened. In practice we designed plans for about a year, things developed in their own way and once in a while the team redesigned its plans according to the developments. Sometimes I wonder if the UAS is spending a lot of time (and money) producing paper work with unknown results. Although the evaluation showed that there is a high familiarity with the core values, for me it is unclear to what extent this can be explained by the efforts within the branding programme. I ponder sometimes realizing that to evaluate a programme suggests the importance of a programme, but in no way proves the causal impact of the programme on the evaluated results. Moreover, in this case the differences between the employees and managers with regard to the core values may even indicate that there is no causal relation between the programme and the familiarity with the core values.

A first major theme of reflection is my position as an adviser to the board. As described between the first draft of the report and the final conclusions and recommendations a lot of work was done. A great deal of the work consisted of shifting meaning. The shifting was done by the members of the coordination team by (re)interpreting concepts, definitions and arguments, and (re)ordering the sequence of them with the purpose of producing a meaningful advice to the members of the board. I asked myself what is the impact of my job in this 'producing a meaningful advice' to the board? And how is this impact evolving out of the work I do? Generally speaking I assume that advising should have noticeable impact on policy, on the behaviour of those who are advised and on what happens next. However, the development of the branding programme and the results of the evaluation evoke a critical reflection on the kind of work I do. What am I doing in my job as adviser?

This questioning of my job is connected to the question of what is happening during and due to the deliberations in the coordination team. Metaphorically it seems that together the members of the coordination team are travelling in a train, planning a trip of which meanwhile we all know it will not reach its planned destiny. None of us leaves at a minor station nor does anyone of us use an emergency brake. To me this is a very intriguing situation because the process of producing a meaningful advice evolves in the process of cooperation. Why and how do we establish and maintain our own, and combined definition of the situation? What makes us going on? Exploring the dynamics of our cooperation within the context of the programme of identity-management could clarify why no one is willing or able to use a brake.

Of course my position as an adviser and the way we cooperate does not occur in isolation. Things are embedded in former choices regarding the policy of identity-management in the UAS. Things are embedded in idiosyncrasies of the interactions of the different participants in the discussions. And things are connected with governmental policy regarding Higher Education. In a still broader sense these processes are embedded in societal discussions around Higher Education and the social-economic welfare of the Netherlands. So I wonder what was really manageable during the four months if the actual interactions of the members of the coordination team are embedded in earlier and other processes?

4.4 A discursive and defining battle in the background

The mentioned themes implicate a host of subjects to reflect upon. In a general sense subjects like identity-management, advisory positions and institutional policy are themes emerging in processes of interaction among people and in which attempts are made to define a common reality. Defining reality is an ongoing process in which we are all involved (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). For me to uncover the subtleties of these processes is intriguing. After all definition and practice are connected in what is stated in the maxim of the self-fulfilling prophecy: "The social process, as involving communication, is in a sense responsible for the appearance of new objects in the field of experience of the individual organisms implicated in that process. Organic processes or responses in a sense constitute the objects to which they are responses; that is to say, any given biological organism is in a way responsible for the existence (in the sense of the meanings they have for it) of the objects to which it physiologically and chemically responds." (Mead, 1934: 77). I see defining reality as politics on a micro level, with potentially huge organization-wide effects if definitions become dominant or become social objects as Mead would say. If in organizational conversations things are taken for real, organizational members tend to act according to its definitions.

Varying ways of pushing through a definition of reality are at hand. In our contemporary civilized western society it is precluded that in daily life we use physical force to superimpose our definitions of reality (Elias, 1969). In general we use courts of law, coalitions, debate or meetings to overcome our differences. In the course of the 20th century (Dutch) civilized people even had to switch from a commanding attitude to a negotiating attitude, in which "... those involved regulate their interaction in mutual consultation and approval." (Swaan, 1979: 98). As a rule a negotiating attitude as the hallmark of ordinary good behaviour in our (Dutch) society is cloaked in the manifold of our conversations, in our paperwork and in our symbolic representations of reality in for instance brands, movies, pictures and fashion. Communication has got a tremendous importance regarding in whatever we do, including or maybe especially regarding a subject like identity-management. Subtleties of different epistemological strategies of including (and thus excluding) and reciprocal power are at work in the process of defining reality (Foucault, 1966, 1971). Uncovering the ways reality is defined on the micro level helps to explain how policy is brought about.

Two discourses compromising

As it has a great impact on defining reality the ongoing battle between a social systems-change discourse and a co-creative discourse within the UAS is to be exemplified in the discussions around the conclusions and recommendations.

Conceptually there is a sharp distinction between these two approaches of development and change. On a discursive level a main difference between the approaches is that the first one supposes that reality is stable, predictable and to a great extent controllable. Rationality is supposed to rule. In the social systems change discourse quasi outside managers and experts are dominant (Parsons, 2007; Stacey, 2007). This approach incorporates a neat system of mission statements, midterm strategy development, yearly planning and evaluation and it is practised in the UAS.

The co-creative discourse postulates that reality is changing, and interaction and collective learning are needed whereby "... patterns of thinking and acting are dismantled and composed: deconstruction and reconstruction." (Wierdsma and Swieringa, 1990: 179). The co-creative discourse sets course on the willingness of people to cooperate. In the UAS co-creation is amongst others advocated in developing educational courses and doing research in cooperation with representatives of external organizations and companies.

The discourses get extra dimensions if plotted in quadrants in which the way an organization develops and changes is differentiated along axes of monovocal/polyvocal and planning/spontaneity (Homan, 2005, 2006). Homan uses this quadrant to show that in reality change is always a spontaneous many voiced ('polyvocal') affair. In recent research regarding organizational values in UAS's a differentiation is made between control-oriented and flexibility-oriented organizational value models. It was found that "... these are not mutually exclusive. In fact, they are in competition."

(Kleijnen, 2012: 33). To my idea this identified competition confirms that in practice change is a many voiced affair with competitive contributions from different perspectives.

In the discussions regarding the evaluation report different perspectives can be recognized. Inez Reker doing research into the effectiveness of our policy, advises to reconsider the internal branding programme because of the apparently failure of its internalization approach. In the positions taken by Cees Corte one can see a slight repositioning from a top down to a more bottom up perspective on identity-management. Remarkable is that generally speaking the members of the coordination team have little affiliation with a strong top down approach, and one can see that reconsidering the programme from that perspective is repressed by the team in the discussions. The effect of all the discussions is that the conclusions and recommendations – as illustrated before in the shifts – can be characterized as a mixture of control-oriented and flexibility-oriented approaches. There is no winner, although given the repression in the recommendations of a strict internalization approach one could say that at least one player is down.

Given the discursive battle it becomes clear that the conclusions and recommendations made up by the members of the coordination team define reality in a broader perspective. The conclusions and recommendations are not solely about the branding programme and its continuation, but also take position on how to manage the UAS or the way changes should take place. In other words: in principle and in practice the members of the coordination team try to talk each other into each other's discursive perspectives on reality (Shotter, 1993).

Contradictory compromises

In reformulating the discussions about the conclusions and recommendations I experience the results as contradictory. I experience the results like the classical paradox of 'be spontaneous'. The other members of the coordination team see open conversations as an expression of what is signified as openness within our core values. For me open conversations also are an expression of my perspective on how changes should be initiated. From my defaults or taken for granted assumptions as described in chapter 3 I favour open conversations as a way of co-creative development of the UAS. However, at the same time my preferences get intermingled with other perspectives, because we proposed to install the core values into all of our policy making for instance into our procedures for job application or yearly evaluations. As a matter of fact the conclusions and recommendations of the coordination team promote an instrumental perspective on identity-management. That is what for me feels like the paradox of planned spontaneity. I think this emerged somehow unavoidably out of the discussions because of the different perspectives on identity-management intermingled with perspectives on how to develop or change an organization.

Thus one of the results of our deliberations is that we reify the core values as if they can and should be managed and controlled from above or outside by someone. For me this reification is not something that endangers personal freedom (Stacey, 2007). I mostly wonder whether this kind of reification has contra productive effects. Shotter speaks of entrapment of the imagined "while any attempt to *complete* them [in this case the core values - FS] as real objects destroys their nature, and can lead to an enclosed (mechanical) form of social life." (Shotter, 1993: 80; italics Shotter). It makes me wonder if my co-creative preferences are illusions. If the bottom line is that diversity and cooperation are asked, what then are the consequences for the way we act after having written down these ambitions? Whatever I or we do, it seems always to get associated with some kind of management control.

I suppose there are contingencies which have to do with the way discussions unfold in the interactions in the coordination team, with the results as documented. I want to explore them. Contingencies also may have to do with my position as an adviser of the board. In general my work implies that I prepare conclusions which formally have to be drawn by the members of the executive board. Probably my effectiveness depends on more than just my opinion regarding some subjects. I realize that I also have to produce something that is accepted and acceptable for many other people.

4.5 Psychological interdependency: social contagion and cognitive dissonance

Are the conclusions and recommendations of the members of the coordination team a sum of well-considered arguments? I would say that the results are a matter of mutual influence during a lot of formal and informal conversations. The almost taken for granted repression of a top down approach is the most obvious example. However, the apparent avoidance of discussions on topics as the critical remarks made on the managers, the compromises in interpretations of the report or remarks on the used branding model also show a lack of argumentation or even negotiation. We never discussed explicitly our different perspectives on how to develop or change an organization. Is this lack of fundamental discussions to explain because the people involved in the coordination team have good working relations and would fundamental discussions have brought with them the risk of tearing down the curtain of smooth cooperation?

Interdependency

Did the members of the coordination team agree beforehand on the main subjects so there was nothing to discuss? Were the members part of an organizational prefabricated web in which is regulated how to interpret different kind of subjects and how to behave properly? Or was the team busy with political games in which the winner takes it all (Homan, 2001)?

The members of the coordination team have different perspectives on subjects, as became clear during the discussions. Cees Corte in representing the commercial company has great interests in the effective results of the programme. We use his company's model for our programme and success or failure of the programme reflects on his business and reputation. Henk Rademakers as the director HR feels involved in this programme because from within his professional discipline he understands that to get employees committed is an important assignment for organizations. And core values are an appropriate bonding agent, although for some time Rademakers felt impeded by formal barriers to design his instruments upon them. Marc Claassen as the director marketing and communication approaches the core values as an important marker for efforts to stimulate reciprocal communication between management and staff. For me our conclusions should be a snapshot of an ongoing dynamic and development process and I am rather doubtful about an instrumental policy regarding implementation of core values.

The lack of political games given the presence of different interests is amazing. However, I suppose that the dominant organizational culture of politeness in the UAS is insufficient to explain the lack of argumentation or negotiation. In practice the members of the coordination team share a responsibility assigned to them and whatever personal considerations, we have to draw up an advice for the board. Moreover, as a matter of fact we are too far advanced with the branding programme to start fundamental discussions (if we ever did...). And of course we know each other, are used to each other and have developed an own pattern of interaction. For the coordination team the programme has become a social object (Mead, 1934). I assume that the common history of the team is one of the reasons that a great deal of the discussions can be pursued by e-mail, since the members do not have relational issues to settle (Block, 1996). In the conversations in the coordination team different interests, an own and a common history, and an organizational obligation intermingle in a process out of which conclusions and recommendations smoothly emerge. Maybe the members of the coordination team are early representatives of a new species, the *homo dictuus*, and a species which is determined by its connectivity and therefore ready to accept different points of view (Christakis and Fowler, 2010). We are connected; our most common feature is our interdependency (Elias, 1969).

In my experience interdependency has a dimension through which we are aware that we have to work together. We are aware that it is impossible to superimpose unilaterally our perspective on other people. This awareness is part of our strategic mental make-up which evolved in the civilized western industrialized society (Elias, 1969). In practice I observe that the most common and dominant strategic behaviour is expressed through a polite interchange of arguments. Conversation is our way to deal with matters. Given our common mental make-up one cannot decide to be or not to be strategic, history has 'programmed' us to be strategic, it has become our normality (Foucault, 1963).

Reflecting upon what the work Elias and Foucault offers, I realize that our rationality is rather limited. Behind our strategic behaviour there is no little man – the famous homunculus – who decides whether to act strategically. Acting strategically is an embedded self-evident part of people's social psychological repertory to act. Apparently, only in situations where we experience more or less extreme difficulties – discomfort, dissatisfaction, disappointment, anger – in reaching our goals our strategic behaviour becomes perceptible. In a situation in which the borders of our comfort zone are crossed and depending on our power potential, we try to enforce things by manipulating other people or by practising verbal or physical violence. In my view within our comfort zone we act on a kind of strategic autopilot, mostly cloaked in different 'outfits' in our different conversations. As long as these outfits keep on being civilized they are mutually accepted. I suppose that we even are not aware that we act strategically because it has become a very common and deeply ingrained organized attitude. "The organization of the self is simply the organization, by the individual organism, of the set of attitudes towards its social environment - and toward itself from the standpoint of that environment, or as a functioning element in the process of social experience and behavior constituting that environment - which it is able to take." (Mead, 1934: 90). From a strong rationalistic point of view our comfort zone potentially has some unfortunate implications. The tendency of human beings to stay in the comfort zone seduces us to take the easy way instead of arguing and avoiding our usual errors and biases (Kahneman, 2011).

Autopilot

Given the rather smooth way of working together within the coordination team my conclusion is that a lot of our work was done on a kind of strategic autopilot. In a short period we worked towards a set of conclusions and recommendations, which are meant to have impact within the UAS. No member of the coordination team shouted, nobody got angry and – apparently – nobody of this team felt manipulated. Together we stayed in our comfort zone. Our 'use' of the autopilot illustrates the 'just talking' through which we organized our reality, "... identifying the most repetitive and so apparently stabilized aspects of our relating treating this as a puzzle or 'game' we can solve or manage." (Shaw, 2002: 95). The smoothness of the cooperation within the coordination team makes me assume that no member of the team defined the situation as that much strategic that he felt a need to break away from conversational behaviour.

Therefore I suppose that the dimension of interdependency in which a lack of awareness plays its part, is of far more interest to help me to explain what happened in the deliberations in the coordination team. Interdependency in a non-awareness fashion implicates that the way we think, we act and dream is depending on our interactions and not on our more or less conscious decisions. Then I would say that what we usually experience as a self-caused action can be explained differently. The work of Foucault and Mead provokes to look differently at self-caused action. Thirty years before the stir Foucault caused by denouncing the human self as an a-historical and

autonomous entity (Foucault, 1966), Mead is held responsible for a Copernican revolution in social psychology by articulating a pragmatist and processual view of reality with a radically social conception of the self (Carreira da Silva, 2007). From that perspective it is explained that what as an action evolves, evolves out of a continuous interplay between two or more people. "The self is not something that exists first and then enters into relationship with others but it is, so to speak, an eddy in the social current and so still a part of the current. It is a process in which the individual is continually adjusting himself in advance to the situation to which he belongs, and reacting back on it." (Mead, 1934: 182). According to Mead we are what we say or do at the very moment we say or do something and we never say or do anything in a void. Who we think we are is a subsequent experience because "the response to that situation as it appears in his immediate experience is uncertain, and it is that which constitutes the "I." (Mead, 1934: 175). By that Mead even connects to present-day neurobiological discussions in which the self is seen as a temporarily condition in a human body, amongst others an effect of the many tides in the organism (Damasio, 1999).

Autopilot: social contagion

A radical social conception like Mead's of the self helps to explain what indeed may have happened in the discussions of the coordination team. A conception like Mead's exemplifies that in the course of conversations agreement arises step by step in such a way that the people involved only afterwards realize what they agreed to. In Mead's conception there is room for conflicts, for different opinions and negotiations. Differences are settled in an ongoing process of responding and adjusting to each other's gestures. In this process meaning is produced. According to recent research this responding evolves rather in a contagious way. People have "... the tendency to automatically mimic and synchronize facial expressions, vocalizations, postures, and movements with those of another person and, consequently, to converge emotionally." (Hatfield et al., 1994: 5). Emotional contagion might be an effective but unconscious way influencing each other, because "it is these stimuli, not accessible to conversant awareness, that are often the most fascinating by virtue of the subtlety with which they affect behavior." (Hatfield et al., 1994: 11).

The concept of social contagion helps to understand what happened in the four months of working together in the coordination team. In a broad sense the members of coordination team seemed to be subject to a process of social contagion in which the members spread and adopted affects, attitudes or behaviour among themselves. I prefer to stress the social and general nature of contagion, contrary to the use of contagion as a process in which one initiator or one model plays a pivotal part in the beginning of a process in a large group and in a process that deviates from the normal (Ginneken, 1999; Levy and Nail, 1993). Although the evaluation report of the internal branding programme more or less caused a focussed action of the coordination team, I see no reason to assume that this evaluation report was the initiator of a contagious process in which we tended to act in the same way. On the contrary, the evaluation report initiated a process in which differences surfaced and had to be dealt with. In my

interpretation contagion underlines first and for all that we are a body which is "... made active by social relations because it is brought into being and mobilized by its positioning in the interweaving in networks of human interdependence." (Burkitt, 1999: 7).

Nowadays contagion is connected with the presence of mirror neurons in the human body, a physiological condition for different possibilities to sympathize with other people (Bien, 2007; Eren, 2009). To be a flawless consultant one is even advised to read the body instead of hearing the words (Block, 1996).

I conclude that the process of coming to conclusions and recommendations by the members of the coordination team can best be understood as a contagious process. Four people who work together for quite a long time and who are assigned to recommend new policy, agree rather easily without discussing or experiencing the contradictions in their agreement. Especially in our informal open working style I suppose contagion is a very effective 'mechanism' because in the situation as such I have not experienced a form of strong coercion on me or the other members to conform to a certain point of view. One could speak of echo contagion, in which un-conflicted recipients reflect and imitate affects and behaviour (Levy and Nail, 1993) or of goal contagion in which goals are inferred from other's achievement-related behaviours (Eren, 2009). In a way the members of the coordination team were examples for each other.

A question remains if and how this non-coercive situation might harm the effectiveness of the conclusions and recommendations as it leads to results which incorporate incompatible perspectives. A question I have no answer for at this moment.

Avoidance of cognitive dissonance

However, if social contagion works, I still wondered how it works. Neither the working of my mirror neurons nor that apparently I imitated the other members of the team, explains that I stepped over, that during the four months of working together I sometimes felt disappointed because what happened or was concluded did not match my ideas.

So I pondered if contagion is possibly fuelled by experienced cognitive dissonance. According to this concept people feel uncomfortable if they experience cognitive dissonance. To avoid this nuisance people do something, react upon this feeling. Apparently the reason for this uncomfortable feeling is that dissonance leads to a blockade in acting, something that was already understood in the early days of American pragmatism (Tedeschi et al., 1971). Cognitive dissonance is defined as having at least two inconsistent cognitions about a subject and this inconsistency makes people feel uncomfortable about them self and leads to a change of attitude. It sounds like a paradox, but in general people avoid cognitive dissonance but under certain circumstances this avoidance-behaviour leads to a change in an attitude (Festinger, 1957). In

an elaborated version of this theory it is verified that if people are not coerced to show a certain attitude and are aware of what they are doing, they tend to change their behaviour towards the exhibited attitude, even if this attitude is not their own in the beginning of the process (Cooper, 2007).

I assume that for the members of the coordination team working together for a long time and discussing a subject during a period of four months the avoidance of cognitive dissonance can help to understand what happened. I think taking a long period of time implies a process of taking little steps towards each other's opinions, and steps taken are hard to be undone. The discomfort felt by anyone to recall a given commitment leads to commitment with conclusions and recommendations in which different but not reconciled perspectives can be found. Unknowingly we as the members of the coordination team built 'a trap' by agreeing piecemeal to each other's perspectives.

Evaluation

Apart from physical force the human body appears to have other effective ways which underpin agreement. The body itself is powerful in unconsciously reducing differences, as underpinned by neurocognitive findings (Koch, 2004; Lamme, 2010; Ramachandran, 2005). Concerning the content of the conclusions this implies that it appears that an equalisation of differences is taking place which is amplified in time through a process of irreversible commitment. Although I could conclude that my perspective on openness, fed by the concept of co-creativity and wisdom of the crowd, has got dominance, this conclusion is contradicted by the rather reifying and thus incompatible recommendations the coordination team makes. Contagion and the avoidance of cognitive dissonance help to clarify how prefab webs (Homan, 2001) or repetitive patterns aspects of relating (Shaw, 2002) are produced and preserved. These social psychological bodily 'provisions' embedded in the autopilot characteristics of the modern strategic mental make-up made that no member of the coordination team has been determining unilaterally the conclusions and recommendations.

4.6 A strategy of a ventriloquist?

I wrote that in general my job implies that I prepare conclusions which have to be drawn by the members of the executive board. My advices should have noticeable impact on policy and on what happens next. In a bit of a malevolent perspective on my work this preparing could be interpreted as a way of framing the mind of my superiors. In practice this framing would imply that the work done together with the members of the coordination team would be a manipulative prefabrication of the way the members of the executive board should look at the policy of the UAS. Given the stipulated ongoing battle between a social systems-change discourse and a co-creative discourse within the UAS, my advice is somewhere located on that battlefield. Framing then can be seen as a part of the weaponry to make a stroke.

From a political perspective framing is defined as a process of selective influence over someone's perception of the meanings attributed to words or phrase, with the purpose to encourage certain interpretations (Lakoff, 2008). Framing is part of a narrative strategy in which someone tries to compel others to interpret the world according to his or her view. In the USA framing is used during elections as a highly political business of influencing people (Lakoff, 2008; Westen, 2007). From the way the UAS's are framed in Dutch public media on supposed bad quality, fraud, lack of supervision and ill-considered innovations I can also derive the political impact of framing (Gendt and Ritzen, 2011). The basic assumption of framing is that if for a long time you can focus the attention of someone else on certain aspects of a subject, that person will adopt the interpretations of the subject at hand (Schwartz et al., 2011). Alternatively instead of frames one could speak of trying to influence someone's prototypical scenario's (Gibbs, 2006) or patterns of significance (Homan, 2006).

Not a shrewd ventriloquist

Following the line of argument of the definition of framing it is obvious that framing postulates a shrewd genius who is able to plan a re-programming of other people. So, in my job as adviser am I a shrewd 're-programmer'? I would be dishonest if I denied that from time to time I evaluate my work from that perspective. Of course I reflect on how to formulate my advices, which words and concepts to use. Of course I am aware that the nature of my work depends on tenacious efforts to accomplish something. In my time as a lecturer I learned from the science of teaching that an effective way to teach is a matter of designing constructive frictions in the assignments (Vermunt, 1994), a matter of small step framing. From a social constructionist perspective I see my work as spreading words and concepts with the purpose of reaping success later, a rather memetic strategy (Brodie, 2009). Clearly this means that my advices are in line with my co-creative preferences. In the drafts of the e-mails or letters I write this is recognizable. Now I even recognize the impact of avoidance of cognitive dissonance, if my advices and language are adopted. Public commitment of for instance the President of the Board with my advice means that he is committed to my statements. So 're-programming' my superior would be successful if I hear him state things which I prepared for him? In that case I really would have manipulative competences and I would be my superior's ventriloquist.

If I would interpret the prototypical scenarios of my superiors as a bunch of personal mental belongings (mental representations) which they use to manage the UAS, and if I could acknowledge that something changed in their representations of the UAS in line with my perspective, then I could say that I am a shrewd re-programmer. However, reflecting on that for me it becomes clear that the avoidance of cognitive dissonance is not a one-sided phenomenon. In psychological experiments regarding cognitive dissonance in his or her laboratory the experimental researcher can play the shrewd role, controls more or less the environment and programs an attitude-change. As if their experiments are 18th century's cinematographic phantasmagorias experimental psychologists believe that their experiments allow them "... to slow down

human behavior and examine it frame by frame, as it unfolds.” (Ariely, 2009: 51). In a manner of speaking the experimental psychologist positions himself as the candle that lights up the hidden psychological mechanisms. But in real life my superior and I have an interdependent working relation in which during all of our conversations we are and get more committed to each other, in which we figure out how to interpret things and in which my preparations for him have to be prepared in a way that connects to his points of view. I think it would be wise to approach psychology not as a natural but a moral science through which we should study how we treat each other in everyday life (Shotter, 1993). If my superior would not be co-creative in some way – and he is – and if I would be unable somehow to commit myself to his views, I better look for another position. Apparently one can only sell phrases (frames) to someone else if they reflect the values of the other (Bai, 2005). The weight of a given advice declines the greater the distance between the advice and the initial opinions of the receiver is, especially if the receiver is high-knowledgeable regarding the subject (Yaniv, 2004).

The other included

So before even of thinking of unilaterally re-programming my superior’s mind, our minds are related and committed in a way which makes working together possible. And it works both ways: in working together there is a mutual influence so who could possibly decide who is qualifying who?

From this perspective the position of a supposed shrewd re-programmer (and the experimental psychologist) is to compare with the supposed outsider’s position which is attributed to or claimed by managers. As if managers have a Janus face through which it is possible to step out of real life, to design interventions and then to step back and change life in trying to frame the subordinates with new insights. According to Stacey this doubling of processes – in the situation itself and in the presumed stepped back situation – is a fallacy as there are “... only processes of human interaction and no one can take an external vantage point in relation to this.” (Stacey, 2007: 265). Moreover, I would add, supposing that you can control a situation from outside is practically impossible and ascribes naivety to your fellow human beings. Whatever the differences between individual competences may be, in my view a human’s mind is so complicated that the social interaction between two or more people in a given situation is far too fleeting and complex to pretend any kind of controllability or predictability (Simon, 2000).

Again some thirty years before representationalism became much-discussed due the rise of cognitive sciences, Mead argued against a representationalist stance in psychology. Although one might compare the me of a person – “the organized sets of attitudes” (Mead, 1934) – with a representationalist perspective on the socializing process of a person, as stated before, according to Mead what a person actually does is depending on the interaction in a real situation. The ‘I’ never walks alone, even if the ‘I’ wanted to. During the discussions in the coordination team the opinions of the members of the board and a lot of other people were in our minds and we often estimated

whether a conclusion would be realistic or acceptable. Our editing of the text to avoid evocative expressions elucidates that. That being aware of someone else's opinions is what Mead would call the presence of generalized others, through which the members of the coordination not only can be members of staff of the same UAS but also bear in mind that they work for and with colleagues and that they share with them a lot of ideas on our reality.

Evaluation

I conclude that my advisory work of preparing conclusions which others formally have to draw, is far from being a shrewd game of framing. From the very first beginning unavoidably I bear the others in my mind. It's not me who makes the differences, it is a joint effort. Philosophically spoken I even don't exist, although my 'I' exists. I cannot imagine my work without the (virtual) presence of the other. By definition an advisory position is interrelated and one can hardly discern the input of participants. Yet once a year my superior and I show logical behaviour by being illogical. In our yearly evaluation we commit an *ex post facto* fallacy (Shotter, 1993) by suggesting that all my work was done by me. As my bonus depends on this fallacy, I can live with that.

4.7 Reflections from a complex responsive process-perspective

Looking back to the conclusions and recommendations as produced by the coordination team, I am both happy and disappointed with the results. I am disappointed because the results are a mixture of different perspectives on development and change, a sort of impossible mixture of planning and planned spontaneity. I am happy perhaps because at the end the introduction of open conversations gave me hope of having promoted a stimulus for self-organization. From a common sense point of view I could call the results lame compromises. However, reflections on self-organization from a complex responsive process-perspective may elucidate other dimensions to explain what happened.

Management control it will be

Although, at the end one could say that the way we worked is quite exploratory by allowing ourselves to share and converge our opinions, the results (including the planning of open conversations) are an expression of management control (Speklé, 2002). It is as if we proclaim the importance of self-organization, but being not confident in its outcomes, we plan the self-organization in open conversations. That is why I called it a paradox of planned spontaneity, but presumably in practice it will turn out as something that is experienced as invented by the staff of the UAS, agreed upon by the board and to be implemented by some members of staff. At the end I assume that it will still be experienced as a monovocal Homan (2005, 2006) and planned change initiated by the top and thus fruitless according to its own standards and unpredictable in its outcome. It appears to be a victory for the social-systems change discourse in which (quasi outside) managers and experts are making plans which have to be reali-

zed by others. Without doubt the conclusions and recommendations of the coordination team will find its way in the mission statement, midterm strategy development, yearly planning and evaluation.

However, claiming the outcome as a victory from one of the discourses unintentionally suggests that definitions of situations can be designed in rather straight forwarded, pre-conceived and rational managed strategies. Meanwhile institutional policy - or the conclusions and recommendations by the coordination team - appears not to be a product of well-considered arguments, but a process in which many different interactions converge into conclusions and recommendations.

Self-organizing transformative processes

From a complex responsive process-perspective something else happened. Conversing resulted in organizing and organizing developed in conversing, as an inescapably self-organizing process (Shaw, 2002), in which under the skin several psychological mechanism did their job. The documented contagious aspects of the interaction among the members of the coordination team underline a self-causing character of interaction. Given the shifts in conclusions and recommendations which become transparent during the discussions in the coordination team, it is obvious that this self-causing character deploys a transformative causality. In line with the complexity sciences this kind of causality explains that "... entities are *forming patterns* of interaction and *at the same time*, they are *being formed by these patterns* of interaction." (Stacey, 2010: 57; italics Stacey). In a common responsibility the members of the coordination team and finally the board formed and were formed within the discussions concerning the conclusions and recommendations, even if only virtually present. In reality things happen as they happen and apparently sometimes lead to logically contradictory results.

Looking back I come to understand that given the inescapably self-organizing process of interaction that even my co-creative input is part of a self-organizing process, which as such is not defined by co-creativity. Paradoxes, disappointments, contradictions and compromises are unavoidably parts of the game. Despite that I know – as stated before – that we try to talk each other into one of our own discursive perspectives on reality, in a kind of naiveté I still supposed that my co-creative discursive input would lead to co-creative results, away " ... from conflict and fragmentation to *the good* as the cohesion of shared vision and joint purpose." (Shaw, 2002, p.155; italics Shaw). Seemingly still with fear to have no control as a programme manager (Groot, 2010b). The peculiar thing for me is that being a Foucault-adept it should have been obvious to me that my co-creative input is part of a discourse that as any discourse must be seen "... as an expression of violence we put on things, or in any case as something tangible we lay upon them." (Foucault, 1971: 42). Unnoticed I hoped that on another level of the playing field I stealthily could convince my colleagues to become co-creationists. I understand now that also co-creationists are not protected from using epistemological including power strategies, even if they are aware of the whereabouts of that kind of strategies.

Self-knowing

At the end "all knowing is self-knowing" (Stacey and Griffin, 2005: 22). In this case my self-knowing leads to realizing that my nuisance with the results is caused by some epistemological fallacies. Labelling the outcome as contradictory implicates a covert desire for truth or consistency. It denies that every interaction changes the nature of the total context and that people don't act according to some systematic or basic rules (Groot, 2010a). The impact of social psychological mechanisms, such as contagion and cognitive dissonance, even underlines the inevitably dynamics of local interactions. Not only a covert desire for truth or consistency may have troubled me, but maybe even a tacit longing for succeeding in managing other people according to my own rules. Inadvertently - maybe incurable - I was thwarted by what from a complex responsive process-perspective is called the doubling fallacy: supposing that you can take an external position towards your situation (Stacey, 2007).

The members of the learning group really challenged me to live through what kind of job I have. I was challenged to reflect upon my ongoing co-creative efforts and the apparent acceptance of this way of acting in an organization where clear results are expected. Someone suggested that I was the organizational joker or fool, the one with a large degree of freedom to act. The discussions led to at least for myself provocative reflections on who I am as an adviser, where I stand for and what I am (un)able to do. These reflections might help me to sort out up till now hardly understood aspects of my position as an adviser to the board.

4.8 A joker: a versatile or protean sense-maker?

The above reflections uncovered that my co-creativity is a decisive precondition for doing my work, but as such not solely the effective purpose or outcome of my work. The effective outcome of my work has other dimensions. An association came to my mind with the work of Machiavelli, someone whose work I read a long time ago. He wrote that the wisdom of a leader depends on the people he surrounds himself with. The leader supposedly makes a wise decision if he chooses people who aren't egocentric (Machiavelli, 1513).

Starting to look upon my position from within the organization, or more specific from within the network of people I am closely working with, I come to see some up till now cloaked dimensions, at least for me.

An undefined position

Formally my position is the position of a director responsible for the development of a long term strategy for the UAS. Practically I have a rather undefined position. It is a personal position, created when in 2008 I got this position and which will vanish when I get another position. Also the fact that I am allocated in the office of marketing and

communication is more or less coincidental when regarding the greater part of my assignments.

In my work – apart from the support in the office I give regarding finance and control, and human resources-policy – I combine advisory work with doing odd jobs for the executive board, nowadays complemented with my PhD-research. The odd jobs mostly have sensitivity: they are new, have impact on who we are and what we do, are on behalf of the executive board and implicate the whole UAS. Alternatively sometimes I represent the board, sometimes I manage a project, and sometimes I give an – unasked – opinion about a subject at hand.

Managing the identity programme is an example of doing an odd job. Due to a discussion I had started in 2008 about the importance of paying attention to the historicity of our identity in relation with the midterm strategy we were designing, identity had become an issue. An identity-management programme was started. September 2009 I became the programme manager of this branding project, because the head of the office of communication – initially the programme manager – fell sick for a long time.

However, from the beginning my position towards this programme was ambivalent. I am convinced that sharing values is an important condition of having productive working relations. Moreover, working before in a different faculty I had experienced that sharing values can give an enormous boost for development and problem solving (Smeijsters and Sporken, 2004). Yet I am well aware of the sacrosanctity which a personal identity 'has' for each of us. I find a branding programme which aims at changing identities 'from the outside' rather unfeasible. So – as mentioned before – from the beginning somehow my acting also aimed at forestalling an in my view unproductive social systems change-approach. The paradox became that I managed a programme which for me in its objectives was unadvisable but by being there I aimed at the possibilities to discuss co-creative ways of interacting in the UAS. Thus my ambivalence about the programme did not preclude me from becoming its manager. In the same line as my co-creativism never hindered generating attainable results.

A colourless chameleon?

Obviously I am perceived as versatile enough to manage this programme, despite my own hesitations or my ideological principles which are well known to my superiors. Or maybe I must see things the other way around because co-creativism is not egocentric according to its own definition and maybe therefore I was the perfect guy to do such a job. Well chosen by my superior: focussed on the process, committed to deliver, experienced enough to coordinate sensitive projects, not afraid to do new things and not competing on power.

Given the characteristics of an advisory position (Block, 1996) I find myself in the role between an internal and external adviser. The odd jobs I do are more or less funda-

mental with generic implications and done in a relatively open setting. No specified contract about time spent, expected results or cooperation is put on me. When I got my position in 2008 my superior also asked me to be a critical friend and to state whatever was on my mind regarding his policy. Within limits I am allowed or expected to take a relatively independent view on subjects.

In my position and given my assignments versatility is needed. I must be able to deal flexibly with different subjects in regard to different stakeholders. This versatility extends not only to different content and communicative competences, but also towards my convictions. The more I would be an ideological fundamentalist, the more I would be unable to manage the projects I manage.

If I would be a protean or chameleonic adviser then it would be impossible to be a critical friend because critical friends do have opinions and do have convictions. Moreover, as I wrote about my taken for granted assumptions: I am allergic for unfounded authority, arguments or convictions. Protean would imply that I act as a chameleon whose colour uncritically adapts to its environment.

The joker

Not being a chameleon but being more or less an anti-authoritarian co-creativist I assume that it is worthwhile to examine if I hold a position of an organizational joker or fool. The fool is the one in the organization who has his role in limiting the overestimating and putting into perspective of one's powers, more specific the power of the people within the network I am working in (Kets de Vries, 1993). In a more practical sense my efforts lay somewhere between being reflective and critical about the busyness and glamour of our ambitions (Raad, 2008) or to see things differently (Firth and Leigh, 1998). When I told three colleagues - whose careers cross mine in a variable intensity - apart from each other that in my research being a joker emerged as a subject of reflection, they immediately backed it up. They recognized me as someone who is always busy in connecting people and subjects, who fiddles with people's interpretations of reality, who often has a (slightly) deviating perspective on subjects, who often seeks new challenges and who always seeks the space between the lines. 'Elusive' as a former superior would call it. Interesting to know is where throughout my career I fulfilled the role of the alienator, confidante, contrarian, truth seeker and mythologist (Firth and Leigh, 1998).

Narrating about the identity-programme I managed, reflexive efforts in and with my learning group and reading about advisory work and the potential presence of an organizational fool a new perspective on my role evolved. In the UAS most projects are started with quite loose definitions and purposes. This identity-programme started in the same way. The people involved - including me of course - in designing and coordinating the identity programme incorporated the methodology of the contracted commercial company, started to discuss with many people our brand-, later core-values, started to redesign our brand-architecture and organized if needed support for

teams. Given the touchy character of identity the people involved also realized it would be necessary to take some time.

In conclusion I think most of the people involved in designing and coordinating the identity programme never intended to enforce a corporate identity, but there may have been dreams about it. However, who else than the joker – no I, no egocentric, no fundamentalist and no framer – could co-creatively have managed a programme with that much sensitivities, and undefined but necessary outcomes? In its results the programme turned out to be a pragmatic mixture of a brand-architecture, an acknowledgement of the core-values, approachable members of the board who are self-critical on their exemplary role and a preparedness to use the core-values as a basis for policy. Conceptually incompatible perspectives still led to acceptable practical politics.

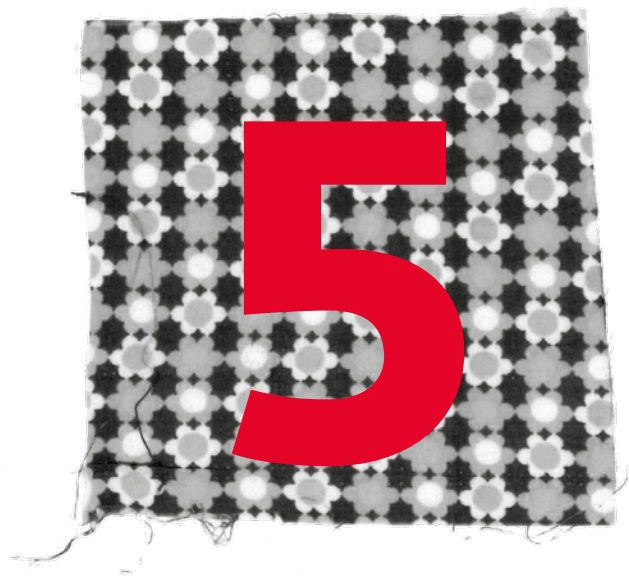
4.9 Reflections in hindsight

The most impressive experience in writing this narrative was that at that time I became aware in a tangible way that as a person I am participating in self-organizing processes. Participating meaning that in interaction with others something is constituted and held upright, but that I am not the independent shrewd planner, the ventriloquist or the framer. What I am is construed in what in a cooperation of people evolves. Based on literature from a complex responsive process origin and through the profound reflexive activities in the learning group I started to understand and experience something new about the power of conversation and self-organization. I thought to understand what it means to be co-creative or a social-constructionist. However, to understand and to realize that even these orientations are inside instead of outside social interactions was the hard lesson to learn. To learn that even my seemingly emancipatory orientations are part of the same micro-political games as any other orientation was quite revealing. I felt being decentred. There is no outside from interaction and to really understand and to experience the consequences of this point of departure was enervating. I experienced that to understand the consequences will be a road with pitfalls.

Reflecting on my position in the UAS from the inside of social interactions brought a surprising outcome. The subject of the organizational joker or fool emerged. Is it possible that I hold the position of the organizational fool? Reflecting upon what happened and on what I did in the interactions regarding the internal branding programme, it became challenging to reflect upon my role as adviser from a very different perspective. A most interesting question became not what I think I am doing but what I am doing. Is what I do to connect to discussions about the presence of an organizational fool? It is a question which is to be answered with regard to what is happening in the UAS in the case an organizational fool is needed somehow.

Looking back on my rather cognitivist defaults as described in the account of my taken for granted assumptions (chapter 3) the introduction of and reflection on the way interaction of people is explained from a complex responsive process-perspective incited other insights. Especially the confrontation of the work of Mead with the more recent developed psychological concepts of framing, social contagion and cognitive dissonance invited me to a reorientation on my cognitivism. A cognitivist stance emphasizes a rather individualistic approach of social interactions. As if social interaction is a game of deliberately and unilaterally influencing each other, as if social interaction is a process manageable by the shrewdest agent. The work of Mead, supplemented with the concept of social contagion, exemplified the social and constructionist nature of human interaction. Connecting these insights to my advisory work is connecting me and my work to other people within the UAS instead of positioning me as a quasi-experimental psychologist who co-creatively 'toys' with people.

A last observation is that in the discussions about the internal branding programme the wavering between a co-creative and planned change approach is recognisable. What I wrote in chapter 3 about a wavering context for the development of policy in the UAS appears not to be some abstract somewhere allocated perspective, but this perspective is real in the positions taken of people in the discussions. 'The wavering context' is an abstraction from what the members in the coordination team were doing; it is an expression of what we were discussing.



Drafting performance agreements: gestures of a contemporary jester

In 2012 as any UAS the UAS had to draw up proposals for performance agreements which had to be fixed in an agreement with the Dutch State Secretary for Higher Education. As indicated before these agreements are outcomes of long-standing societal debates regarding Higher Education. Main concerns are quality, funding, autonomy, accountability and governability of universities. Given the actual political context the performance agreements potentially have a great impact on the reputation, profile and financial position of a university.

To forestall a lack of performances these agreements are connected with conditional financing of a part of the yearly budget of the various UAS's. The end of December 2011 the State Secretary unilaterally decreed the performance agreements as the Netherlands Association of the UAS's and he did not reach an agreement. On the quality and ambitiousness of the agreements the State Secretary is advised by a review commission. The review commission designed a framework for reviewing the proposals for the agreements. The proposals were to be sent to the commission at the very latest the 5th of May 2012.

I became involved in the process of formulating our performance agreements. In my narrative from the point of my involvement I exemplify how in practice this governmental policy is appropriated by the senior managers of the UAS, becoming in some way part of their responsibility. I also narrate on what I suggested for the communication about and realization of these agreements.

I start with describing - for readability reasons ordered in months - my involvement with the drafting and finalizing of the performance agreements up till the 5th of May 2012 (see 5.1 and 5.2). I end the narrative with the general appeal by the President of the Board to realize them (September 2012). Thereafter I take up my exploration of my position as a corporate jester and explore how a jestership might be connected with what I came to understand from what I did in what happened from January till September (see 5.3). From there on I elaborate on the dynamics of the different situations during the months of drawing up the performance agreements predominantly from the perspective of a complex responsive process-approach (see 5.4). Finally I reflect in a more general way upon a position of a corporate jester related to what I experience as today's organizational reality in Higher Education (see 5.5).

The narrative presented here is was written between January 2012 and March 2013. The analytical and reflexive orientations on the narrative are presented in their 4th version.

5.1 Countdown to May, building up till September

January: a flabbergasting invitation

In the mid-afternoon of the 6th the General Secretary to the Board entered my office. After some chitchat he invited me to reflect on the performance agreements. In asking me, he reminded me on the good salary I earn, probably suggesting that I ought to do something in return. He invited me for the next meeting of the executive board. A bit flabbergasted by his remark about the need to earn my salary I agreed on his invitation.

In preparation of the meeting of the 17th I put up an outline based on the letter of the State Secretary (Zijlstra, 2011). I emphasized the many risks we had to manage. I wanted to attract attention for two topics. First the fact - based on our ranking - that we do good things in our UAS, but never (exactly) the things politicians or management strategically plan, made me ask what's the worth of our strategic planning. Second my concern was to prevent introducing new concepts which would suggest many changes in standing policy. My option was to stay close to our successful long-term policy and not to unintendedly broadcast a negative evaluation of our results so far. Given the former lack of results of tight planning I wanted to tickle everyone to realize that planning and implementation never will be an evident fact. I guessed that my input would be inconvenient because it would put things into perspective before starting to work on them.

I introduced "Imperturbably remaining ourselves" as a leading motto, to underline that amidst of all political and societal turbulence we had our own convictions, successes and stability on which we could depend. It should be an inspiring antidote for the everlasting critical evaluations and the policy-hypes around Higher Education.

Present on the 17th were Paul Broersen (President of the Board), Frans Custers (member of the board, portfolio: Finance and Control), Ella Rietkerk (member of the board, portfolio: Education and Research), our director Finance & Control Fiona Cornips, the General Secretary to the Board and I.

This meeting about the agreements did not have a specified agenda, so when asked who would start, I started with an elucidation of my summary, especially pointing to the risks of not being able to fulfil the demands at the end. It aroused some annoyance and was interpreted as a bit of a cynical proposition. When Frans Custers wanted to know what amount of money potentially was at stake, it struck everyone that it concerned 5 to 7 million Euros. The focus of the discussions became the development of critical performance indicators, the responsibility of Fiona Cornips. She had prepared information on the indicators quality and educational success. From October 2011 she had felt urgency to start developing these indicators and tried to convince us of this urgency. The other indicators profiling, spearheads and valorisation had not been her concern. One of her conclusions was that the prescribed indicators did not match

with our management information system, which would complicate the completion of the indicators.

My participation on this subject was none, at that time not having expertise on this matter and not being involved in what was done up till then. My outline was discussed again. In general we agreed that our policy should remain connected to what we already intended and to do no more than asked for. And it was recognized that we do not have a strong tradition of strictly planning and strictly realizing. Paul Broersen hoped that the performance agreements at last would offer the acknowledgment of our achievements up till then. We feel a bit underappreciated. My summary was, despite its evanishing tinge, found useful for a meeting of the board and senior management. I was invited to join, but had to pass for private reasons.

February: wrapped in a second-hand garment

The 8th I got a call from Paul Broersen who invited me to suggest ideas about the process of establishing the performance agreements. It has become routine in the UAS to discuss intended policy with senior managers and associate professors. In this case undoubtedly it was necessary given the obliging character of performance agreements. From Fiona I understood that apparently the board had asked the two of us to prepare something for a next meeting with senior management the 2nd of March.

The 17th I came to understand from Fiona that the board expected me and her to manage the establishment of the performance agreements. It was an odd experience for me as I was not aware of the question. Maybe I had misunderstood the phone call of the 8th. We agreed to subdivide the tasks: she would prepare the indicators on quality and educational success and I the indicators for profiling, spearheads and valorisation. Together we prepared a precise overview of the indicators, the responsibilities, the wished for involvement of other employees, the establishment of a task-force and a planning in time. We emphasized the importance of communication about the process.

The 28th was a meeting with the board. Together we mainly restated earlier views about content and reaffirmed former statements about our position. Out of the blue for Fiona and me a document written by Paul Broersen was mentioned, which he wrote as a first move of the profile of the UAS. In the document the characteristics of the UAS were connected with our standing policy and the already chosen spearheads in connection with the regional social economic demands. The board itself wanted to discuss this document before spreading it in the organization. Next day Fiona and I got this document.

In this meeting we shared uneasiness about the performance agreements: the review framework was still unknown, we had difficulties in getting unambiguous internal figures in regard of the performance criteria and about the short time we still had.

Especially Fiona felt she would be helped with clear definitions. Moreover, the Secretary of State more or less demanded that the performance agreements were to be widely discussed with employees and students.

In Fiona's and my proposal were some ideas about involving quite some managers, associate professors, and students in the establishment of the agreements. But given the concerns about clear definitions organization-wide involvement disappeared to be an issue. Later on the disappearance of this issue was converted by me into an argument of strength, of no need in involving a lot of people.

In between the 17th and 29th I became overflowed with information: documents about former preparations, information from other UAS's and discussions with different people about what was at stake. I felt confused because of a lack of and lag in information, an unclear position, an intense cooperation with a colleague I never worked with before and a deadline on my mind. In my experience Fiona Cornips was very busy with a lot of other things, so often we had scarcely time for discussion. She felt very responsible, but had to manage in between of other obligations. Moreover, more colleagues were to be consulted, because they managed specific dossiers. Given my confusion and her busyness a dedicated management of the process remained unclear for some time. I felt a bit of an outsider: not an expert on certain matters and because working with Fiona Cornips who was already busy with the subject for a long time. Also to be suddenly confronted with the document of Paul Broersen did not help me to feel inside. At the same time I was confident that things would turn out all right. Of course I was not totally unfamiliar with a lot of topics and knew most of the involved colleagues. Moreover, I knew that I am able to sort things out in a short time and to involve other colleagues. According to Ella Rietkerk I was the only one who did not panic. For me it felt like wearing a second-hand garment which fits another body, but in time it becomes your own.

March: spring coming?

Taking the responsibility of managers of the process Fiona and I started assembling information about the relevant issues, tried to get developed unambiguous data, interpretations and definitions of these issues. In different groups we also toyed with target values to get an idea of what the implications could be. "Imperturbably remaining ourselves" helped to keep on staying self-confident. It appeared that to deliver necessary data was quite complicated given our data bases. Moreover, the definitions of some issues were unclear and our standing policy was not always easy to find out. Information appeared to be spread out through the organization with often different people being responsible for keeping up the information. Fiona and the members of the board were quite annoyed by some of the colleagues, being confronted with the fact that they were not in control. For me it felt as an inconvenience, a bit of trial and error with many options. I had not expected otherwise because to my experience in the different positions I had, there is always a difference between what you think to

control, someone deludes you to think to control and what you really control. Nevertheless, the responsibility to produce something before the 5th of May was large for all of us so it came down to organize the right actions.

It was crystal clear that the way we would draw up definitions would have quite some consequences. We expected that a very hot issue would be the definition and the status quo of the amount of contact hours for students. A stern definition could mean that quite some departments did not fulfil the requirements; a light definition would mean the opposite. Moreover, we found out that it was very hard to gather the information about the status quo of the amount of the contact hours, despite a former assessment on behalf of the Inspectorate of Higher Education. At that time I think we all wavered a bit among different definitions because of the uncertainties in data, the difficulty in estimating the consequences and our ambition to be at the top of the ranking.

From the 5th we were guided by the published framework of the review commission. E-mail traffic, a lot of walking in and out offices and meetings moulded the process. My work-agenda came to be dominated by formulating the performance agreements, not by managing a process of involvement.

What also did not help to reduce uncertainty about definitions and data was an ongoing discussion between the State Secretary and the Netherlands Association of UAS's. There was a tug about definitions of the quality of Higher Education, about impairing the autonomy of the UAS's and about the birth of a bureaucratic system (Science Guide, 2012, 2012a). Should we interpret the performance criteria as a superimposed prescription or an obligation to do our best? The 6th the General Secretary to the Board sent an e-mail to all the managers that for the time being for the members of the board the procedures of the review commission were unacceptable, but that it would be wise to go on with the preparations. Later on a meeting of the presidents of the boards of the UAS with the members of the review commission (16th) helped to reduce tensions regarding the framework. At the end all the UAS's complied with the State Secretary, although with quite some legal restrictions.

Despite this uncertain context Fiona and I continued the work and prepared a document for a meeting of the members of the board with our senior management. Being aware that quite some information still had to be gathered and final decisions still had to be made, going on appeared more sensible than to wait. Spring was in the air, although hesitantly. The 27th I received an internal evaluation report in which quite a lot detailed information was to be found. To my displeasure two processes of gathering information had not been connected.

April: capricious circumstances

Unfortunately Paul Broersen fell sick and as turned out only from the 27th he would be back. Frans Custers and Ella Rietkerk became responsible for the establishment of the

performance agreements. Senior managers met the 5th. Two issues were very sensitive in this meeting: the establishment of an overarching profile for the whole UAS and the definition of contact hours for students in their foundation course. Given the standing policy regarding spearheads an agreement emerged that the overarching profile should be formulated in the direction of natural sciences. The deans of the faculties of Health and Technology were contended with the chosen profile, the other deans more or less reconciled themselves to this fact. The discussion about contact hours was intensive: the prescription of 424 hours (afterwards corrected to 504 hours due to my miscalculation) of real contact between a lecturer and students would have quite some financial and didactical consequences for some faculties or departments.

For me it was the first time since long that I participated in a meeting of the board and other senior managers (about 20 persons). Many diverging remarks were made on style, missing details, lacunas and unclear descriptions. Moreover, every faculty wanted to be recognizable in the document. I hardly participated in the meeting which instead of one took two and a half hour. I experienced the management meeting as a Babylonian confusion of tongues. Given my former experiences as a dean I know we always had trouble to focus. I vainly had hoped for a more concise discussion.

To cut a long story short, up till the 26th, supported by colleagues and with feedback from a selected group of members of staff, Fiona and I continued working on the agreements. From time to time we had discussions with Frans Custers and Ella Rietkerk. During this month the project became dominating my free time. I adopted the role of and was accepted as the planner by the members of the board and Fiona. I assembled quite some versions of the document, that constantly expanded due to the urge of managers and associate professors to profile their faculties and due to the fact that Frans and Ella preferred a detailed and precise document. They did not want to take any risk in respect of the review commission and were anxious about the possible negative consequences of ill prepared agreements. Especially Ella was very critical regarding precise formulations and definitions and one time beforehand she asked me if I could take criticism. Afterwards she told me she did this – given that she and I cooperated the first time since her appointment - to test whether I was competent enough to handle different opinions and to convert them into one document.

Still for quite some time uncertainty about issues dominated. Different perspectives on priorities among management remained and it appeared that the Dutch UAS's approached the agreements very differently. Moreover, former vagueness in policy and lacunas in our management information avenged itself. Of course Frans, Ella and Fiona got annoyed with all the difficulties to get the right information and with the different perspectives. I got most annoyed from the every time changing perspectives on the content of the document. At one moment I even exclaimed that my work was a Sisyphean task, as if I like Sisyphus was punished by the god of the underworld, to roll back a stone (read: document) to the top of a mountain every day. Although, I have to admit, this Sisyphean task was sometimes compensated by the fun we had during

discussions as the deadline came near. To avoid misunderstanding: in the meantime definitions became clear, for the values of most of the targets on success of study and quality we had consensus and the overarching profile (Technology and Care) was agreed upon. I was ready ... I thought.

The last but one version of the document was commented by representatives of the Netherlands Association of UAS's and by Paul Broersen who returned from sick leave the 27th. According to Paul less details, more directly embedding in the social economic regional developments, more ambitiousness on the targets and more self-evident self-confidence should dominate the document. As a result I produced a document in which all the performance agreements became connected into a coherent perspective on what we had to offer and promised. The agreements had got a final structure in which audacity was connected with matter-of-fact policy.

May: all birds lay an egg

The 2nd was a final meeting with the senior managers and the members of the board about the performance agreements. The present managers – those not being on holiday – gave some final remarks and the document was concluded. After the final editing the document was sent to the State Secretary and spread throughout the UAS. A few days later one earlier involved colleague sent me an e-mail with his compliments for the document.

June: betting on sprouts

Given the ultimate importance of the performance agreements I suggested Paul Broersen that we should try to integrate our standing programme regarding the core values (chapter 4) with the way we start to work on the performance agreements. I emphasized that we should not overload the organization with many different initiatives and we should concentrate on our main objectives. He agreed to that. Thereafter I contacted the only director which had shown interest in the new project we had in mind regarding the core values. Serendipitously this director was Fiona Cornips.

Together we produced a document in which we emphasized that to our view a planned change for the performance agreements would not work and we should strive towards an open culture in which professionals have a large scope for developing education and research. We pleaded for reliance on self-organization supported by organization wide communication about creative solutions and results. The document we produced was used by the members of the board for their discussions about the communication and realization of the performance agreements.

September: first leaves falling

I tried to influence the communication about the performance agreements in two ways. At the request of Paul Broersen I reflected upon the board's intended own performance agreements for the year 2012-2013. I judged that their only message appeared to be more control (even total control) and that an invitation for openness

and inspiration was missing. In a meeting with Marc Claassen, who was preparing Paul Broersen's speech for our annual opening, I emphasized again the necessary invitation for openness and inspiration. In his speech Paul invited everyone to start discussing and exchanging ideas, suggestions and results to realize the performance agreements. Happy us. However, somehow for me it was an anti-climax to experience that quite some people only heard the message that we start to reduce our overhead with 10% within three years. The fact that apparently jobs were at stake overshadowed the invitation to reflect upon the performance agreements.

5.2 Highlights in Sisyphean tasks in a Babylonian context

To exclaim that my work was Sisyphean may have been presumptuous. Given the disorder around definitions and the encounter with the Babylonian confusion of tongues, the others also shared nervousness or despair. Prototypically I could say that Frans Custers, Ella Rietkerk and Paul Broersen acted as they did because they are held responsible for directing the future of our UAS. Although differing in opinion I saw their acting as aimed to provide in a vision, clear definitions and unambiguous procedures. Fiona Cornips was to a large extent responsible to maintain support systems to account for our performances. The recurring deviations in definition or data caused nuisance regarding specific people and initiated instructions to reduce the differences. I also worried about the feasibility of our project, realized the many lacunas and worked hard to overcome them. Primarily I approached my task as a puzzle, assigned to accomplish a document before the 5th of May. However, I did more than solving a puzzle. For that reason I will continue the exploration of my possibly role of the organizational fool (see chapter 4).

An evolving way of planning

I entered the process of establishing the performance agreements at a moment we had four months to go before completion. I learned that for the members of the board these agreements were already on their agenda from September the year before, but up till January urgency was felt differently in the board. Paul (and the General Secretary to the Board) expected that the agreements would be put off the political agenda and if not, a concise document would meet the expectations. Ella, Frans and Fiona opted for a well-planned approach, early preparations and detailed information.

From January on focussed attention was organized, because from then on the board estimated that the agreements really had to be delivered. Sheer from a time perspective for me this project started the 6th of January when General Secretary to the Board entered my office. Or was it December the year before? In preparing a workshop Paul Broersen would give I had come up with the motto "Imperturbably remaining ourselves". During the drafting of the performance agreements this motto tickled, it produced self-confidence, it gave a recurring argument to sort out discussions and it produced a binding perspective. So did I start already in December? Or did the project

start for me in the midst of February when Fiona Cornips clarified me about the expectations of the board regarding my involvement?

Previously different persons in different places in our organization had the performance agreements on their mind. Because of feeling a different urgency about the same concerns one can speak of a Babylonian situation. The thereupon more or less focussed attention by the members of the board from January on revealed other Babylonian dimensions. The difference in definitions, interpretation of used data, difference in opinions even among the members of the board and an unclear status quo of standing policy, spelled out that only after an investment of months of discussing, a shared perspective among the most involved people would become possible ... at least for the time being regarding this document. Already some months later it became clear that measures on paper are hard to realize.

Even from January up till May the planning was loose, due to the different opinions in the board about the content and extent of the performance agreements, and the on-going vagueness in the political context. At the end the document depended on the mobilized expertise and feedback of a selected amount of members of staff and a tight planning from the second half of April.

April appeared to contain the turning point. For all of us the project elucidated that the supposed rationality of our organization is fragile and intangible. If I would ideally define rationality as a controlled, realistic, exact, grounded and a coherent interpretation of a situation, then we worked hard to bring closer an at least temporarily controlled situation concerning the performance agreements.

As I mentioned before 'coming into control' was a first reaction from the board on the experienced tangibility. To forestall unrealistic expectations regarding realizing the performance agreements, in June and September on several occasions, ideas were discussed about relying on a self-organizing process. This reliance was more or less displayed in the speech of Paul Broersen. Nonetheless, I notice that the tension between a responsibility to organize progressions on fulfilling the agreements and to rely upon what organizes itself keeps coming up.

Shifting content

For some time the difference in opinions among the members of the board was covered up. Up till the beginnings of April the emphasis was on a condensed document, in which broad perspectives and ambitions were leading. With the sick leave of Paul Broersen and due to a meeting of presidents of UAS's which was visited by Frans Custers, the emphasis shifted to a specified document with an extended overview of our ambitions, our performances up till then and the way we wanted to realize our future performance. At the end of April the different approaches were united into the final document, in which - as I wrote - audacity and matter-of-factness were balanced.

At that time I sometimes wondered how decisions about the performances were made. Given our track record on high quality, ambitiousness was apparent and at the end the members of the board decided for instance to have a target value on success of study of plus 1.5% compared with the present situation. At the same time our Institutional Researcher forewarned us that success of study is hard to influence and to retain the present situation already would be hard enough. Sometimes the many discussions on this subject seemed to me as casual as pub talk, but underneath a certain company blindness did its work: 'if we are good we shall be better!'

My performances

From time to time I experienced the drafting as a Sisyphean task because of the recurring efforts to develop a shared perspective and because of a slightly absurdist feeling caused by the apparent mosaic-like reality. Mostly I stayed calm, aiming at disentangling the Gordian knots. In the past I often have done last minute jobs and I like doing them. I know that a period of discussion, uncertainty, negotiations and research is necessary before people are able to agree. So I wait, now and then helping by lubricating the wheels. A deadline helps a lot to reach an agreement. As I do not have a management responsibility anymore, my primary task was not to put forward suggestions about the target values, but to support a process in which decisions regarding content were made. So I watched and listened carefully, trying to avoid unnecessary confusion and distilling the consensual items out of the discussions.

From the beginning it is also obvious that I also have an agenda of my own. Starting by stipulating my concerns about the attainability of strategic plans and my suggestion to stay close to our daily reality, I tried to influence the discussions. I framed the discussion by the motto and thereby influenced the way the performance agreements were formulated. Moreover, given my concern about the attainability of strategic plans I promoted ideas to rely upon a self-organizing process. I was quick in seeking a coalition with Fiona Cornips - it helps if the Director of Finance and Control is on your side - and together we tried to influence the ideas of the members of the board. Stipulating doubts about attainability, producing a middle-of-the-road motto and stimulating reliance upon self-organization appear to be a framework which colours my performance; not as some kind of rules to follow, but to tickle other people on their basic assumptions and in this case to forestall a blind belief in the umpteenth attempt to plan rigorously our organizational future. Irrespective of the way my input is evaluated, that I was putting things into perspective apparently was accepted.

5.3 Taking up the thread: the jester known from time immemorial

In chapter 4 I explored my position as an adviser of the board and hypothesized that I hold the position of an organizational fool, joker or corporate jester. To recapitulate: the jester is the one in the organization who has his role in limiting the overestimating of someone's powers (Kets de Vries, 1993), in being reflective and critical about the

busyness and glamour of the ambitions (Raad, 2008) or in seeing things differently (Firth and Leigh, 1998). Some colleagues acknowledged that I am some sort of an organizational jester. The core-business of an organizational jester is traditionally described as “the ability to access truth lying hidden and undiscovered in the blind spots ... (and to) ... uncover actions that can be taken to address real-world situations.” (Riveness, 2006: 412).

This present-day description corresponds with the position which is attributed to a jester throughout history. The word jester originates from merry fellow and teller of tales. In Europe ‘jester’ is used from about the 14th century (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2012). Historically jesters were to be found on the courts of kings and emperors. From China, India to Europe they were some sort of a provision for the king or emperor to protect him (or her) from pride and conceit. For the less powerful the jester was an entrance to the king or emperor as the jester himself often symbolized the less fortunate through his appearance. A jester was allowed to say what other people only could think and he was allowed to mock authority (Otto, 2001). In a highly strategic environment as a court, where lip reading became an art (Elias, 1969), the jester reduced tensions and opened doors. Apparently in early 20th century sociology the modern jester was indicated as the stranger who due to his bird’s-eye view was less burdened with bias (Simmel, 1908). Or otherwise he was seen as a member of the so called ‘freischwebende Intelligenz’, highly educated citizens who were loosely connected with their community, had no strong convictions, saw no harm in synthesizing different opinions and got their inspiration from the ‘Bildungs’- ideal of the 19th century (Mannheim, 1978; Schüller, 2006).

“I see, I see what thou not sees”

Although there are signs that a corporate jester is badly needed nowadays in modern organizations (Heuvel, 2012; Raad, 2008; Veth, 1998), it appears that the corporate jester as such has disappeared from the organizational landscape. In an historical overview of the development of the profession of consultant one can read that the consultants became hired in by large corporations because it was assumed that they could see things nobody else could see any more within the organizations (Hellema and Marsman, 1997). Apparently consultants were hired in to uncover blind spots. So it is interesting to explore if consultants have become the corporate jesters. A brief overview of the development of this profession and a first critical assessment of theories of change which serve as the discursive or rhetorical dimension of advisory work, will enable me to have a start for the answer to the question whether organization-advisors are the present day corporate jesters or whether nowadays the advent of a new kind of adviser would be sensible. Answering this question will also help to clarify my position as an adviser.

Maybe from around 1900 in modern organizations the seat of jesters is for a greater part occupied by advisers or consultants, as apparently they started to work from the perspective “I see, I see what thou not sees.” (Hellema and Marsman, 1997: 15). Organi-

zations became large and bureaucratic and started to be organized according to the rational principles of division and mechanization of labour (Pieterse et al., 1987). To assist in the development of these organizations became a profession on its own, in due course discursively guided by quite some different theories of change.

Up till the 1960s rationalization and efficiency were dominating the discourse of the advisers, but from the 1950s the human side of enterprise started to penetrate their discourse. Theories of scientific management were superseded by theories of planned change and group dynamics (Cozijnsen and Vrakking, 1995; Hellema and Marsman, 1997). In the aftermath of World War II up till the 1990s different approaches evolved on how to develop organizational strategy and how to change the organization according to the strategy. These approaches are a sample sheet for the perspectives with which consultants set foot in organizations.

Roughly a difference is to be made between prescriptive and descriptive approaches (Mintzberg et al., 1998). Prescriptive approaches are those which work in the belief that an organization and its environment are to be analysed (for instance by SWOT's and scenarios) and are predictable. Change is supposed to be manageable or controllable by a change agent (for instance CEO's, professional managers, consultants). These approaches were developed up till the 1980s. These approaches are, as illustrated by the way the performance agreements are to be dealt with, still very influential in the political and managerial discourse. Prescriptive approaches are rather formal and technical approaches of organizations, management and change. Planned change still has strong adherents (Cozijnsen, 2013).

Descriptive approaches started to enter the managerial discourse from the 1980s. Within the descriptive approaches the concept of development in its many dimensions is emphasized. Whether entrepreneurial, mental, conflictive, emergent, collective or cyclic, common notion within these approaches is that strategy or change are not consequences of planned interventions. Changes are presumed to be the outcome of efforts of visionary leaders, processes of organizational learning and transformation, power games or assimilation of environmental influences. A visit to any website for selling management books immediately clarifies that the descriptive approaches still are developing their full potential.

Currently a whole range of new practices are developed which encourage breakthroughs in dominating paradigms in organizations. Whether for instance by trying to deregulate the dominant language games (Feltman et al., 2010), to make a provocative appeal to return to working-relations inspired by a Rhineland working-culture (Weggeman, 2003), to plead for free space in organizations to take a chance to deliberate mutually about relations and objectives (Kessels et al., 2007) or to plead for free space through developing an idea for distributed (Kessels, 2012) or shared (Dijkstra and Feld, 2012) leadership.

Theories of change have built up mass, of which the rich diversification in perspectives is an eye-catching feature. At the same time the effectiveness is debated, leading amongst others to an appeal for evidence based practices (Cozijnsen, 2013; Sonnaville, 2005).

Legitimacy of the adviser

In general advisers have an external or internal position and apparently "every time when you try to change or to improve a situation without having a direct influence on the implementation, you advise." (Block, 1996: V). In his position the adviser is depending on his client, both for his assignment and for the adoption of his advice. Therefore the adviser often will be unsure if his advices will gain at least some recognition. There are doubts about the effectiveness of advisory work. The adviser runs the risk of encapsulation (Strikwerda, 2004; Twist et al., 2007) and confirmation to the sponsor (Weggeman, 2003). Instead of being the jester as a finder of hidden truth and being an adviser for actions which for sure will have a practical result, the adviser may have become the one who performs his trick and leaves (Homan, 2005).

Doubts about the profession culminate in questions like whether commercial interests due to the professionalization of the advisory work have brought about that the adviser is no longer the little boy who tells the emperor that he wears no clothes. The adviser might have become someone who seeks a problem for his 'proven' method (Hellema and Marsman, 1997). After hundred years of making a living out of advice the profession is criticized for being a myth, a rhetorical construction of those who call themselves advisers (Sonnaville, 2005). The growing doubt whether organizations are manageable (Stacey, 2010; Weggeman, 2003), a legitimate question becomes if there is a need for another kind of adviser.

Critical assessment of the discourse on change from a complex responsive process-perspective

From the perspective of a complex responsive process-approach the rhetoric – the many theories of change – of the advisory work is criticized (Stacey, 2007). Despite the diversity theories of change still hold on to a common but consequential assumption. Common is that stability is seen as the normal state of affairs (Chia, 1995; Stacey, 2007). Different in the theories is only the way stability is created or evolves. Whether prescriptive or descriptive, whether by planning, visionary or distributed leadership, power games, individual or collective learning processes or by wearing out a next phase in an organizational life-cycle, fundamental in this discourse is a state of rest or equilibrium. In case of disturbances of stability processes are initiated to restore the balance, although the new state of rest might not be the same as before. In that case it is assumed that people or the organization have learned or passed an evolutionary phase.

The fact that change is approached as an temporarily situation – apparently as an inconvenient and precarious intermezzo in between stable situations – emphasizes

the importance which in the prescriptive and descriptive rhetoric is attached to a stable (read: normal) state of things. The consequence of this point of departure is that a dualism is introduced as if an organization or a person (e.g. an adviser) is able to step out of a normal situation, is able to organize some sort of learning process and then is able to step back into the altered state. From a complex responsive process-perspective this is – as mentioned before – called the doubling fallacy (Stacey, 2007). The fallacy implies to assume that change is disconnected from everyday organizational or personal life, although at the end of the day change may indeed have some consequences for this everyday life.

I assume that anyone who has been part of an organization and change programmes knows that this dualism is an illusion. My experience – as stipulated in chapter 3 – with working in teams to design reform together, exemplifies that even if ‘stepped out-situations’ are created, the same ideological battles are fought, but then hidden in design-oriented language. If an organization is to be described as unstructured and ever changing, things are and remain unclear (Homan, 2005). Change programmes are part of an on-going process of sense making by people within their organizational context. Change mixes conversation, routines, spontaneity, cooperation, conflict and power (Groot, 2010b). From a complex responsive process-perspective change, whether emergent, incremental or disruptive, is our normal state of being, but slides into invisibility in what is called the dominant modernistic discourse (Chia, 1995; Toulmin, 1990) as propagated by descriptive or descriptive theories of change.

In an ever changing social reality which is brought about in the on-going interactions of people, one may wonder whether effective change in the way it is proclaimed by theories of change, ever will be present.

If change is real in its continuity, my supposed role of a corporate jester and the doubts about the manageability of an organization make it obvious to reflect upon my role as a jester from a point of view in which manageability and the belief in planning of effective change is being questioned.

The return of the jester?

If it is true that nowadays there is again a growing amount of corporate jesters (Otto, 2001) then my position, as I became to reflect upon my position in my narrative about the internal branding programme, is to be explored in regard to this growing presence of jesters. Apparently, nowadays corporations again need some sort of an adviser to challenge them or to think outside the box, but why a jester? “The Corporate Fool is a manifesto for a new business professional: an indispensable amalgam of roles which stimulates effective change and resolution in this foolish world.” (Firth and Leigh, 1998: 43). What may a jester’s role be in a foolish world by abstaining from the possibility of planned effective change will be taken up again after some reflections on the process of drafting the performance agreements.

5.4 Reflections from a complex responsive process perspective

Undoubtedly the performance agreements will keep on being directives for our policy, with an intention of the board to accomplish them with reliance upon self-organization for successful action. In this way I assume a tense situation will evolve in our UAS, in which tensions will grow between processes of self-organization and sharply defined performance indicators. It could become a paradox of creative and innovative non linearity, and wished for precision close to an equilibrium of fulfilling the demands of the performance agreements (Hodge and Coronado, 2007). In the next years it will be interesting to explore the actions on different levels which will evolve to meet the performance criteria.

If this tension occurs I will be co-responsible due to my actions during the development of the performance agreements. As 'the author' of the final document I am co-responsible amongst others for bringing together two different approaches about how to deal with the agreements. However, in my experience none of the involved managed to act as a change agent compelling to draft a well-defined and well planned project with clear objectives.

From the perspective of a complex responsive process-approach I realize that the way things happened have quite some other dimensions. Instead of being blushed with shame, as one of the readers of the above account experienced, because of the seemingly disorderly way we proceeded, it is thought-provoking to reflect upon the way our policy actually developed. The final and polished document covers up an experience of disorder, although 'dynamic' would be a better marker.

To uncover what is beneath the polished surface of the document I will explore some concepts of complexity and a complex responsive process-approach related to my narrative. Uncertainty, breakthroughs, self-organization, power and interdependency will pass in review. This exploration should help me to understand what happened and should help me to understand what it means to depart from a complexity perspective.

Dynamic uncertainty

Given the lack of focussed attention, the difference in opinions among the members of the board, the political uncertainty and pressure, the late arrival of the evaluation framework, the different interests of the deans and directors of services, the lack of clarity in definitions and the short span of time I could speak of a local dynamic situation, in which all these elements are lived through. With hindsight I can assume that given these circumstances the outcome of the process was unpredictable. "It is true that there is still a trajectory description if initial conditions are known with infinite precision. But this does not correspond to any realistic situation." (Prigogine, 1996:105), a situation which clearly resembles the starting phase of drafting the performance agreements. Even from the midst of April, when the deadline came nearer and quite some discussions had taken place, it would have been hard to predict what the out-

come would be. The return of his sick leave made that Paul Broersen influenced the final result still quite strongly, even just before the expiration of the deadline.

I label the interactions involved in the drafting of the performance agreements as dynamic and complex. In these interactions a host of issues were present: the unpredictable political process on a national level, the lack of planning, the difference of opinions and interests, the not yet crystallized effects of a recent reshuffling of faculties and management of the faculties, and a lack of time. These issues were present in terms of uncertainty, worries, mutual relations, feelings of hurry and urgency, and of course in the arguments used to discuss and decide on matters.

From an interventionist perspective on complexity - derived from a Complex Adaptive System-approach (CAS) – what happens in a system can be labelled as complex if three or more processes interact and their course is undefined (Zuijderhoudt, 2007). Within a system things become unpredictable because of the interactions of at least three processes and within the system new solutions or synergy (Zuijderhoudt, 2007) evolve as a result of the interactions (self-organization) or are provoked by interventions.

A complex responsive process-perspective on complexity implicates that there is no logical conclusion or solution for the situation, but in local processes of self-organization a temporarily order emerges in the interaction of involved people (Groot, 2010b). From a complex responsive process-perspective there is not such a thing as a system which more or less exists independently from the interactions of the involved people and which can be provoked to change in a predictable way.

Self-organization is set out as a process in which "... nobody tells the water that it has to organize itself this way." (Homan, 2005: 354). If metaphorically speaking all the involved people regarding the drafting of the performance agreements were 'the water' then from a complex responsive process-perspective neither I nor someone else would have been able to organize the process in a predictable way. From the perspective of a CAS it is assumed that clever interventions would have helped to bring about a new, more efficient order.

From a complexity perspective the drafting of the performance agreements can be described as a self-organizing process. In the things done by different people a process evolved of all the involved which had to wait if the outcomes proved and proof to be worthwhile. Interdependency and involvement in the interactions precluded externalist positions, meant as being able to manage unilaterally the process or its outcomes. However, all of the involved were part of what came out.

In the next I label three occurrences as being of special importance in this self-organizing process. By doing that I realize that my labelling is done in retrospect and as such could suggest that somehow it is possible to define unambiguously that some occur-

rences are more important than others. However, my intention is unassuming: I try to understand what happened from a CAS and/or complex responsive process-perspective and by that, I also try to understand a CAS and/or complex responsive process-perspective on a conceptual level. I try to give words to what I experienced and to what happened on topics as self-organization, power and social interdependency. Afterwards I will come back to the question whether the ascribed importance to some occurrences can have some special consequences.

Three occurrences

In my view three occurrences seem to be of special importance. First the lack of planning of and the on-going discussions during the process, second the introduction of the motto "Imperturbably remaining ourselves", and third the sick leave of Paul Broersen. These occurrences play their part in a breakthrough during the drafting process.

From a CAS-perspective a breakthrough promotes shifts in the process of self-organization, either regressive or progressive. "A breakthrough consists of three statements: the first about a potential or tension in the environment. The second about what unacceptable is about the way of proceeding given the potential, tension or pressure, and the third about suggestions for a new way of working." (Zuijderhoudt, 2007: 183). In other words: if something is demanded and the way it is handled is not productive, alternative arrangements are needed. I will use these statements to explore a part of the process of the drafting of the performance agreements. However, topics for discussions remain if and which arrangements might be needed, and if and how to generate alternative arrangements.

Given the short term- to be interpreted as the environmental tension - in which the performance agreements had to be produced, the short sick leave of Paul Broersen was a blessing in disguise. The sick leave eliminated the delaying discussions - given the deadline an unacceptable way of working - about the amount of specifications the draft should contain. The sick leave was the breakthrough to enable a pragmatic union of the different perspectives - as a new way of working - also due to the just in time return of Paul Broersen. The final result satisfied both factions in the board. The result was not a rational and hardly conquered consensus. A not to be planned biological viral infection unleashed the self-organizing momentum for a satisfying outcome.

To understand another breakthrough one has to know that profiling was a very sensitive subject. Profiling implicates making choices about priority in extra funding, in public relations and ensuring possibilities for growth. In the UAS, profiling was a lingering subject; more or less an evaded taboo in policy by accepting profiles of many educational and research domains. The relatively easy way a common and reduced profile for the whole UAS was agreed upon was unintentionally conditioned by the lack of planning of the whole process. The short term, an unavoidable deadline and the potential implications of the performance agreements promoted that within a few weeks a lingering (statement 1: unacceptable way of working) and touchy subject

(statement 2: environmental tensions) was concluded. In the midst of April the deadline worked as a time-trap in which avoiding or postponing political manoeuvres regarding a binding profile were no longer possible (statement 3: new way of working).

The breakthroughs elucidate very clearly what the implications of transformative causality are in a process of drafting performance agreements. As stated before this kind of causality explains that "... entities are *forming patterns* of interaction and *at the same time*, they are *being formed by these patterns* of interaction." (Stacey, 2010: 57; italics Stacey). If I replace 'entities' by 'involved human beings' then it becomes explainable that after the meeting in which the profile was agreed upon, the members of the board felt as if they had received an unexpected gift.

From a complexity perspective my motto functioned as an attractor, stabilizing perturbations which could produce sideways away from attainable performance agreements (Zuijderhoudt, 2007). Sometimes literally the motto was quoted to end discussions, cultivating a discursive practice in which a possible introduction of a rigid change programme was forestalled. "Words have an ominous power: they take the place of things." (Ten Bos, 2011: 20). An ambitious reform-discourse was deprived of its manifestation before it even came to mind.

Send your boss with sick leave?

If two elements can be seen as breakthroughs one has to realize that these breakthroughs are specific for this process of self-organization. Generalizations like "send your boss with sick leave" are unwise because one can never predict how this kind of actions affects real interactions among people, even in a situation in which a boss might have a delaying influence. Generalizations like this would lead to a narrative fallacy because of "... our vulnerability to over-interpretation and our predilection for compact stories over raw truths." (Taleb, 2008: 63). A basic proposition of a complex responsive process-approach is that every situation is different (Groot, 2010b). One cannot plan auto-catalytic or co-evolutionary processes (Homan, 2005), developments go from 'here to somewhere' (Homan, 2006). History or passed experiences that are used for predictions will prevent us from seeing what is new or peculiar.

A complexity and complex responsive process-perspective elucidate the mentioned before tension between creative and innovative non linearity, with longing for precision of the performance agreements. Assuming that the speech of Paul Broersen might have initiated the way the performance agreements are discussed and in some way realized during the next years, one could say that he aimed at promoting a way of working "... in which the informal feedback networks are sustained away from the equilibrium in a state of bounded instability. The disorderly dynamics of contradiction, conflict, tension, and dialog provide the force for changeability." (Stacey, 1995: 24). In that case other than instrumental tools and techniques are needed (Stacey, 2012b). Therefore it will be necessary - and the intentions are there - that there will be many networks and connections between people throughout the UAS. Self-organization

should be the motto for spontaneously and randomly interactions for which reliance upon people and reliance upon the quality of emerging organizational renewal are conditional.

Self-organization

These many networks and connections should not be idealized as if working together will be the solution for excluding differences or conflicts between two or more people. Neither I nor the others involved were working together in a network through which the truth about our situation was unveiled. I and others were involved in a social construction of truth (Gergen, 1999) in which in different networks of people and through different connections an agreement was reached about the profile and value targets for our UAS.

Strictly speaking I could say that the performance agreements only were a product of a coalition of powerful managers and these performance agreements express that these managers, with the support of some advisers, are "... supposed to know what is happening through environmental scanning and internal resource analysis, on the basis on which they are supposed to choose the best outcomes for their organization and design the systems, including learning systems, which will enable them to be in control of the strategic direction of their organizations 'going forward' so that improvement and success are secured." (Stacey, 2012b: 41). Given the nuisance these powerful managers felt because the performance agreements for Higher Education might lead to old fashioned Soviet-state planning (Science Guide, 2012b), one can image that this nuisance will be shared by more members of staff throughout the UAS, yet blaming managers for agreeing to them. The fact that the reduction of overhead was the most conspicuous fact for quite some people shows that some networks of people were not tightly connected. Also it shows how a coalition of powerful managers was not sufficiently in touch with parts of what is traditionally called the shop floor. I doubt that sufficiently being in touch to produce predictable outcomes is ever possible; different connections and coalitions would have produced different outcomes.

Power and interdependency

Looking back it is easy to see that interdependency of and power differences among the involved people influenced the outcomes. They were most manifest in the discussions about the profile. In its practical sense profiling will mean that more budgetary means of the UAS will be allocated to the projects faculties which promote technology and care. Given the budgetary consequences the outcomes of the discussion were important for every dean. However, at the beginning of the discussion no one had the power to decide for them all. For a long time it was known that a profile had to be chosen by the UAS, but the deadline of the performance agreements obliged everybody to follow suit in a short span of time.

Interdependency became visible during a meeting when the dean of the Technology faculty excused himself for representing the faculty that would get budgetary priority, as he knew how badly his colleagues also needed budget. At the same time this example elucidates the working of power as no other dean obstructed this priority. Instead of obstruction deans started to connect their faculty with the new profile. No one risked his or her good working relations or position by opposing to the inevitable. In general it is obvious that "we depend on others; others depend on us. In so far as we are more dependent on others than they on us, more directed by others than they by us, they have power over us, whether we have become dependent on them by their use of their naked force or by our need to be loved, our need for money, healing, status, career, or simply excitement." (Elias, 1970: 93). Given this Eliasian perspective on interdependency, power should not be approached as a thing or a possession which someone can use unilaterally or arbitrarily. Power should be approached as an opportunity to settle things more or less as you hope for within an actual situation. In line with Elias (1970) one can say that power is a structural feature of all human relations and given the processual character of these relations the real balance of power has to be negotiated every time.

The negotiable character of the balance of power can be elucidated with the discussions about the prescribed 504 hours of real contact between a lecturer and students in the student's 1st year. Although the financial and didactical consequences for some faculties or departments were great it was accepted that Ella Rietkerk and Frans Custers more or less unilaterally decided that 504 hours would be the norm. There was a bit of skirmish when some deans tried to change the definition and thus potentially changing the amount of hours, but as the members of the board could not be tempted, discussions quickly evaporated. Being a nuisance on a subject which was and still is a societal hot issue does not promote one's position, and there were little arguments to use another definition. Moreover, for some deans the norm of 504 hours would mean the allocation some extra budgetary means, so a compensation for the loss of budget because of the chosen profile was already on its way. In this way the disturbance in the balance of power already became restored through a side door. From a complexity perspective the financial compensation can be interpreted as an attractor which changed the direction of discussions.

Unknown till the end

From the perspective of a complex responsive process-approach it becomes clear that the final version of the performance agreements was a document of which beforehand the outcome was unknown and in its details even unpredictable. The many interactions among different people on different levels of the organization, people who depend on each other in their professional status, gave birth to a document with which many people start or have to start working. Still, if the wished for networks and connections of colleagues to realize the performance agreements will be established,

they still may be dealing with the same sort of unpredictable processes of which tensions and conflicts will be part. How and what kind of patterns will be formed is unknown; the results of human interaction are approached as temporarily and unpredictable. Given this statement I hope that the performance agreements will trigger some tensions to motivate people to cooperate in a productive way.

5.5 A complexity perspective: the corporate jester in an as foolish experienced world

Looking back to my efforts in respect with the performance agreements I found myself in a situation where prescribed standardization of Higher Education and my preference for self-organization jarred. Given my non-threatening position regarding status and positions of the others involved, I was alternately the moderator, mediator, negotiator, arbitrator and appraiser (Csermely, 2009). Given the way I became involved, for some time I was situated as an outsider, I assume expected to be realistic and to communicate patiently with quite some people. Because I know most of the people involved but have no strong connections with them I could act as the link who bridges some of the contradictions, uncertainty and differences in opinion. In producing and revising texts, in talking with different people with different opinions, by staying out of discussions and by rounding up the differences at the end. Is being weakly connected, bridging, revising and rounding up to qualify as the work of a present day corporate jester?

A blend of roles

Modern corporations can be compared with courts. They are like giant hairballs in which intangible routines and procedures sustain conformity and strategic behaviour (Mackenzie, 1998). Apparently in these hairballs contemporary jesters are needed. In general jesters are characterized as outsiders, realists, open and communicative (Firth and Leigh, 1998). In contemporary times I would say that one of the jester's main contributions is to connect and to bridge the differences (Csermely, 2009; Firth and Leigh, 1998).

In my acting a blending of a traditional and a present-day role of a jester can be distinguished. In starting my involvement with proclaiming the vanity of all planning efforts I take the role to limit the overestimating of someone's powers (Kets de Vries, 1993) or to say what other people only can think by mocking authority a bit (Otto, 2001). In working towards a final draft I connected people and found ways to overcome difficulties. I would say not as some sort of a change agent, but as someone who rather flexibly keeps distance to remain able to connect. In my acting is little regard on content, but quite some respect for local and tacit knowledge.

Although on the payroll of the organization, a jester is the outsider, someone who is connected to the organization, but through his position is somehow disentangled

from his environment and capable of having a detached perspective on matters. This disentanglement is explained by a lack of striving for power (Firth and Leigh, 1998) or a lack of strong links in the networks and thus not fully participating in the real game (Csermely, 2009). The jester's realism is grounded in a sceptical empirical orientation on reality, "... not that he lacks confidence, only that he holds his own knowledge to be suspect." (Taleb, 2008: 191). And thus he also holds the knowledge of others suspect out of a rather ironical and demystifying attitude, or maybe benevolent innocence (Otto, 2001). Finally a jester acts in different networks of connections in which he never is the key figure but acts as the weak link between them. He is often asked for advice and has a greater chance of being rewarded in different ways (Christakis and Fowler, 2010).

From a complexity perspective the jester is to describe as the weak link - or chaperone (Korcsmáros et al., 2007) - who in non-linear circumstances (Mackenzie, 1998) or in instable situations in all kinds of networks advances some sort of (temporal and 'workable') stability (Csermely, 2009). This advancement is only possible because in general the jester is not really needed in normal circumstances. Paradoxically the jester himself is not striving for stability. Metaphorically in his sceptical empiricism he lives near the place where our representations or models meet reality and where randomness and instability infiltrate experience (Taleb, 2008). In his sceptical empiricism the jester is more or less a vibrant cynic who "... is able to quit the idea of the Good as the ultimate goal and to surrender oneself to what already is there ... and through which the turning up of always further lying goals becomes superfluous." (Sloterdijk, 1983: 367).

What's in it for me?

Analysing and reflecting upon the drafting of the performance agreements for me it becomes clearer that approaching what happens from a complex responsive process perspective, implies that a different perspective on what I am is emerging. First of all it was surprising to be questioned on what kind of position I hold and if this maybe could be some sort of jestership (chapter 4). Second it is surprising that to reflect upon what I am doing can be couched by reading on literature about the history and role of a jester. By re-reading the German philosopher Sloterdijk the jestership even becomes connected to an earlier time in my life, where amongst others I read Sloterdijk's work on cynicism.

Looking back I realize that with reflecting on the phenomenon of jestership that even before I considered of being a jester I was spurred by a connectionist orientation which comes close to what I now understand as a jestership. My first big project as an adviser of the board was to organize a process through which our institutional strategy could become a matter of wisdom of a large crowd (Li and Bernoff, 2008; Suro-wiecki, 2004; Wierdsma, 2005). In chapter 3 it was introduced as the wiki-project. To connect meant connecting many perspectives in giving them a chance to express them. And although in the drafting of the performance agreements there was little

possibility of involving a lot of people I still aimed at a process of realization in which reliance upon self-organization was leading.

I start to realize that for me this reliance upon self-organization is not only a moral imperative. This reliance is also based on a perspective on our contemporary society and consequently developments in Higher Education. My acting is or may be a response towards the way I see things happening in the world from a broader perspective. If so, my acts still are my response, and are in a way within my professional life my responses related to what I see as influential societal developments. So in a last part of this chapter I reflect upon my perspective on what is happening. My expectation is that against the background of what I will call the foolishness of the world, continuously tensions will arise between a planned change approach in which predictability and accountability are sought and daily life in which actual and unforeseen problems are to be coped with. These tensions are not reserved for the UAS I work for, but I assume are common in a lot of organizations.

A foolish world? Some tentative reflections

The performance agreements as ordained by the State Secretary can be seen as one in a series of political or governmental efforts to protect the Dutch people against the foolishness of the world, in trying to guarantee Higher Education of outstanding quality. Outstanding educated people are seen as needed for the collaborative and competitive battles a globalized world dictates. The performance agreements are a sequel in trying to manage Higher Education according to what I earlier introduced as NPM, which amongst others fosters the use of management instruments which are regularly used in the private sector. Quite some politicians, boards and managers of public organizations firmly believe that with the use of these management instruments the overall results of an organization will improve. For others there is very little evidence for this overall improvement. NPM even would lead to counterfeit quality (Carter et al., 2011; Stacey, 2010) or pervert consequences (Raad voor Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling, 2011). Even a member of the review commission, set up by the State Secretary to evaluate the performance agreements, openly pronounced that control of the realization of the performance agreements is impossible (Brouwer, 2012). For me this dissension, even in the heart of the institutions, is an illuminating illustration of the experienced foolishness of our days.

The experienced foolishness of our world evolves out of unpredictable, uncontrollable and in any case fast developments, indicated by, what from an economic perspective is called globalization. Globalization reveals an interdependency which manifests itself in unexpected and often unwanted consequences in the social and economic life of many people. Nowadays worldwide people have to deal with the paradoxes of modernism in which growing differentiation goes along with growing dependency, in which growing control goes along with more freedom of choice and pluralism, and in which a growing richness in possibilities goes along with a growing vulnerability (Loo and Reijen, 1997).

As such, from the onset these modernistic paradoxes are leading to desperate personal struggles against an overwhelming influential world (Mandelbaum, 1971) or – nowadays – feelings of huge discomfort with oneself (Verhaeghe, 2012).

Reflections on this foolishness are different. In our variegated world quite some insecurities and differences will have to be dealt with. For some the inevitable price to pay for rapid growing economic welfare is cultural alienation, with McDonaldization as an ambiguous symbol for what is happening (Ritzer, 2011). For some living in a flattened world implicates a world in which worldwide competition and collaboration are standard and will be more and more imperative in the future (Friedman, 2006). From a more critical perspective we have to deal with living in a risk-society. Three industrial revolutions (Pieterse et al., 1987) have left their marks with unforeseen and often unseen side effects, leading to worries about health, nature and existing social bonds and political ideals (Beck, 1986). From a historical or philosophical point of view modernity is coming to an end (Lyotard, 1979; Toulmin, 1990) through which the practical and the local will be made heard again. Whatever the perspective: social reality is perceived as shifted or shifting from stable to transient.

McDonaldization of Higher Education

The performance agreements of the UAS's can be seen as an expression of the continuing McDonaldization of Higher Education through which the wish for efficiency, calculability, predictability and control of standardized organizational processes and outputs becomes paramount (Ritzer, 2011), amidst a world which is experienced as insecure, haphazard and emergent. The State Secretary sets a modernistic, paradoxical target in which control and pluralism are to be connected: in a transient reality creative solutions are needed but to be fulfilled on a very specific basis. A paradox which also can be recognized in the appropriation of the performance agreements in the UAS.

Every UAS has to deal with this paradox. However, in starting these kinds of processes one has to consider that in our part of the foolish world "... a monomania for tough-minded, cold-blooded competitive correctness has bred the spiritual sensuousness out of most of our human enterprise. That leaves us with a reality of synthetic personas and pasteboard passions, an epidemic of barren careers and a wasteland of workplaces devoid of flavor." (Mackenzie, 1998: 128). The managers of the UAS who are confronted with the performance agreements, are held to deal with them and start acting as if they are able to plan the realization of them. I assume that most of them are aware of the fact – underlined by our institutional research – that there are no causal relations between targets and undertaken actions. Also it is known that changing the behaviour of professionals is very tricky and touchy to undertake (Wanrooy, 2007; Weggeman, 2007). Nevertheless, against better judgement and earlier intentions the board started discussions about how to plan and implement the agreements, this time starting with the development of strategy maps and with the intention of doing it the

right way this time. These strategy maps are meant as the first step in the realization of the performance agreements to come from 'intangible assets to tangible outcomes' (Kaplan and Norton, 2004). Accommodation to these processes probably will be the rule, a critical reflection on how and why given former results on planned change may only occur fragmentarily. I suppose as everywhere we have managers who assume that they cannot afford to lose control. Although - learning from a complex responsive process-perspective - control is an illusion (Groot, 2010b).

The mentioned managerial accommodation might run a risk in producing 'synthetic personas and paste board passions' as far it concerns the performance agreements. Accommodation which will be reinforced by social contagious processes through which instruments are accepted (Taleb, 2008). Still, I suppose that behind the paste boards efforts will be undertaken to guarantee quality of education. The performance agreements will be the public transcript (Scott, 1990) in which everybody will translate its actions. Real efforts will be enclosed in the daily transcripts, in line with the work of Mead (1923) the agreements cannot be otherwise than functionalized within daily professional life. For the sake of the UAS it will be a matter of serendipity if most of these efforts meet the performance agreements.

Expectations regarding a jester

Again asking the question how to explain a growing need for corporate jesters and why corporations need people to challenge them and to think out of the proverbial box, I suppose that in an as foolish experienced world a jester especially has a role to play in bridging the continuously present tension between nonlinearity and wished for precision. Departing from some sort of 'freischwebende Intelligenz', reflexivity and an understanding of variety and dissension (Sonnville, 2005) a jester could become the needed but maybe quite elusive adviser. I assume that this jester could be helpful in a transient reality by declining the idea of effective and overall change and final solutions, but rather by provoking reflexivity on what is at stake. However, the last word about a jestership is not spoken. In orienting me on the subject of a jester I came to read about the existence of bricoleurs in organizations (Duymedjian and Ruling, 2010). Apparently a bricoleur is a connector par excellence. A subject to explore!

For me it will be interesting to experience and to reflect upon my involvement in projects which will be part of realizing the performance agreements, given the inevitable tension as described above.

A personal reflection

I end with a personal reflection regarding my supposed membership of the brotherhood of jesters. I prefer the label jester above joker or fool, or as recently suggested by me, I prefer 'corporate critical friend' (CCF). Mocking reality is part of the job, but not as some sort of entertainment. The work of a jester is serious business, given today's complexity of the world and the interdependency of people who work together and try to establish something. As stated before a jester is associated with a merry

taleteller; in relation with the concept of a vibrant cynic who deflects reality but at the same time supports building new stories, a denomination as jester or corporate critical friend seems to be the right thing.

5.6 Reflections in hindsight

Reading back this narrative I find it rather explorative in character. A corporate jestership, complexity theory, the attainability and changeability of institutional policy are explored from the perspective of complexity and more specifically from a complex responsive process-approach. Concepts from a naturalistic interpretation of complexity (Csermely, 2009; Korcsmáros et al., 2007; Taleb, 2008; Zuijderhoudt, 2007) are brought in, to reflect upon processes of self-organization. From a specific complex responsive process-perspective interdependency and power are mapped as elements in processes of self-organization. These concepts help me to understand what is happening. An intriguing question remains if and to what kind of actions the evolved commitment on the final performance agreements will lead. Social interaction, power and interdependency more or less moulded the document on the agreements. However, also a document is a temporarily item in ongoing interactions in which its status and content will be functionalized differently in different situations (Mead, 1923).

The potential and possibilities of a corporate jestership are explored in a historical, theoretical and present-day perspective. There appear to be sound reasons to reflect about such a position as such, or as a redefined role of (external) consultants. Reasons are to be found in a world which is experienced as fast changing and full of risks. A marked fact is that the motto "Imperturbably remaining ourselves" counterbalanced - an enabling constraint (Stacey, 2010) - what I describe as the foolishness of the world. Apparently I was not the only one in need of some brakes.

There are more questions to be answered than answers given. Conceptually jestership, complexity, power and interdependency potentially hand me over tools and techniques (Stacey, 2012b) to reflect and to act differently within my organization.



A case of consent about dissent

In recent years journalists reported many cases of the failure of policy or mismanagement, and the sometimes far-reaching consequences of these failures. Software companies, financial institutions, housing associations, institutions for health care and institutions for the care of elderly people and for the disabled, and institutions for education have caught the eye of the public media because of their failures. It aroused quite some societal and political dissatisfaction.

Sometimes things went wrong in such a way that failures became apparent when it was too late to repair them. Resigning board members, judicial investigations or imposed controls were the consequences. Nowadays a managerial nightmare must be that waking up one reads in the newspaper about some severe mismanagement at one's institution. I assume that also a lot of my colleagues would have bad days for the same reason.

Apparently a deterioration within organizations happens gradually (Commissie onderzoek financiële problematiek Amarantis, 2012). Probably early warnings about things going wrong were neglected. At the same time it always will be a question which signals should or could have been taken seriously.

To my knowledge a derailment as the above has not been the case at the UAS. However, derailment may wait in ambush because nobody knows nor is able to control what is happening in an institution of about 15.000 students, with 1800 members of staff, housed on eleven locations in three different cities. Even if there are early warnings, they may easily get lost in the labyrinths of the institution. Moreover, with regard to the amount of rules given by government and the necessary implementation of these rules within existing institutional practices, it might be unavoidable that one day derailments will happen (Ankersmit, 2008).

In the realm of early warnings and organizational deterioration I position this project. It evolves out of my former projects, a connection which will be accounted for in the concluding part of this thesis. At first the main subject of this project would become 'organizational reflexivity'. Organizational reflexivity was to be about a willingness to reflect upon and to discuss regularly within the UAS what we are doing. Keeping track of the ambiguities and consequences of decisions in developing institutional policy would be the subjects of reflection and discussion. After a discussion with the President of the Board I simplified the subject of organizational reflexivity to 'dissenting voices'. How and why that happened, and what happened thereafter will be part of my narrative.

Time for discourse

At the point of time I write this chapter almost one and a half year have gone since the start of this project. The narrative is written between December 2012 and June 2014; the analytical and reflexive orientations on this narrative are presented in their 5th version. At first sight the most obvious explanation why this project took so long is

that I cooperated with people with busy schedules. Planning a meeting was a lot of work for the involved secretaries. However, busy schedules explain only partly the duration of the project. Given the span of time of and the many things which happened during the project I condensed my narrative by highlighting some issues and by recapitulating some subjects not in a strictly chronological way. Therefore in my analysis of and reflections on the narrative sometimes I will mention details which are not presented in my narrative.

This narrative will have a rather detached tone of voice. The angle taken is a discursive one with the intention to clarify the cacophony of used arguments (Dekker, 2013) and the way the organizational reality is framed (Homan, 2013) in these discussions. This discursive angle also mirrors the rather rational and detached way in which the discussions evolved. Even when emotionally charged words were used, they were used rather argumentatively. However, the most important reason to take a discursive angle is the explorative character of the discussions. There were no big incidents which preceded these discussions, but of course former personal experiences and different responsibilities played a part in the arguments used. As will be seen, in due course the discussions took different turns. My analysis and reflection afterwards will amongst others elaborate on these turns.

First of all I will present the narrative and the themes which emerged out of the discussions and reflections upon it (see 6.1 and 6.2). Because dissent has to do with the topics of power and control I will elaborate on these topics (see 6.3). Departing from that elaboration I reflect upon the way the discussions about dissent evolved - as described in my narrative - and which and how arguments are used within these discussions (see 6.4). To explain the way the arguments are used I focus on how uncertainty and time are entwined in these discussions (see 6.5) and how this entwinement of uncertainty and time enable a reflection upon provoking interruption as a way to enable dissent (see 6.6).

6.1 A narrative about consent about dissent

December – March: a long prelude

Paul Broersen (President of the Board) and I discussed the necessity of appointing me as a Corporate Critical Friend. I argued that there is an upcoming appeal to appoint corporate jesters to prevent mismanaging (e.g. Heuvel, 2012; Välikangas and Sevón, 2010). Regarding the UAS amongst others Paul and I discussed that openness or critical feedback was wished for. Rather thoughtless I talked about the need of 'countervailing power', a concept that strongly emphasizes opposite interests. This was instantly replaced by Paul with 'dissenting opinions', a concept that emphasizes disagreement. I assumed that the topic at hand is touchy and complicated, as it is about existing hierarchical relations. Therefore I thought it not clever to discuss exact definitions, because immediately the discussion would be about an interpretation of the

actual situation. A discussion which still had to start. Sometime later Paul informed me that all members of the board acknowledged the importance of the topic.

I prepared a memo which was to be discussed in a board meeting. I gave some examples how fear, uncertainty, compliance and political cleverness were to be seen in the UAS. In the memo I still toyed with the idea of appointing me as a corporate jester, but had developed second thoughts about it. I realized the danger of riding my hobbies. Moreover, some first spontaneous reactions of different people to the idea of me being a corporate jester indicated that a jestership presumably would divert criticism to one person instead of being a shared responsibility. We agreed that I would work out some ideas regarding paying more attention to dissenting opinions.

The desk research which I undertook for an orientation in the subject showed that there are quite some organizations in which things went wrong amongst others due to the fact that dissenting opinions were spirited away. Narcissism, power games, financial and personal greed, lack of a strategy, permanent reorganizations, creation of administrative and communicative facades, underestimation of the power of identity-differences and an uncritical staff had had devastating consequences for some renowned international banks, an international holding of supermarkets, a software company and a worldwide famous concern for electronics (Battes and Elshout, 2008; Groot and Gessel, 2009; Houben and Wester, 2001; Lotringen, 2012; Metze, 1991, 2009, 2011; Poel, 2006; Smit, 2004, 2008). According to the then present discussions in public media similarities with some educational institutions were apparent (Berkeljon, 2012; Bommeljé, 2013; Cort, 2012; Giesen, 2010; Goossen, 2012; Heuvel, 2012; Pous, 2012; Willigenburg, 2011a, b, c). My intentions with the desk research were to explore what went wrong in these companies and to develop ideas with regard to dissent to prevent derailments. If for instance narcissism, the creation of administrative and communicative facades or the burden of permanent reorganizations would be at stake at the UAS, could I develop some ideas to forestall derailments?

For the moment I designated the topic of dissenting opinions as a matter of organizational reflexivity; a preparedness to reflect on what and how things evolve in the UAS. In trying to materialize this preparedness I several times suggested Paul Broersen to organize an evaluation about the way the institutional policy had evolved during the last one and a half year. To my feeling this process – including for instance the drawing up of the performance agreements, the way the implementation of these will be arranged – had some surreal dimensions and could be exemplary to give dissenting opinions some space. However, Paul did not respond to my repeated suggestion. Apparently the topic of dissenting opinions still needed some intensification.

April: a game changer?

We had a new discussion about dissenting opinions because of the letter of our Minister and State Secretary of Education in which they amongst others write about the need to organize constructive dissenting voices in institutions for education (Minister

en Staatssecretaris, 2013). Our Minister and State Secretary suggest far reaching measures for supervision of these institutions. They suggest that future members of the board should swear an oath on being austere in service of a public cause. Moreover, the Minister and State Secretary will develop rules for organizations to be used to evaluate the scope of an institution. A scope that should fit to human needs. And they plead for stimulating the presence of constructive dissenting voices. According to them a quality of a responsible member of the board has to be to stimulate dissent. By them dissent is seen as a correcting mechanism against mismanagement.

More Ministerial rules to solve problems which partly evolved because of the many rules people have to deal with, Paul and I agreed upon, would be a paradox. But with this letter the importance of our discussions about reflexivity and dissenting opinions had grown and got a more or less a formal character. These Ministerial suggestions will become governmental policy, so we concluded that we still had a chance to do things in our own way. Paul already had discussed the letter with his colleagues in the board and invited me to write my own assignment how to deal with the letter and our ideas up till now. Given the letter of the Minister and State Secretary my project became about encouraging dissenting voices.

In my assignment I wrote that I will develop ideas and proposals about stimulating dissenting voices together with some colleagues in a yet to form think-tank. I proposed to do it in such a way that the ideas would set out beyond a prototypical managerial approach of risk management, governance or resilience, and beyond a prototypical social democratic approach of institutionalizing dissenting voices in all kinds of regulations. What would lie beyond is unknown. The board would communicate about my assignment in a confined way to offer as much elbow-room as possible.

Then a period of calm around dissent took off. The months of May, June, July and August obviously there was little time to discuss. Examinations, the preparing for next academic year and holidays have the upper hand in daily organizational life.

September – March: reflexive activities

Back from holiday I found an e-mail of Paul Broersen in which he reports about the discussion in the board about my assignment. There are hesitations. I can go on, however I will be invited for an in-depth discussion with the board, because they have different perspectives on what is meant with dissenting voices. Especially at a moment in which the board wants to foster the motto "a deal is a deal" as they experience that made agreements with deans or directors are not a guarantee that the agreements will be observed. "Organizing dissenting voices" almost sounds as stimulating organizing disobedience. At the same time they acknowledge the importance of the subject, in my view dominantly from the perspective of risk management. Risk management with the aim to control that things develop as agreed and to prevent being confronted with unwanted surprises. I stipulate that in my opinion dissenting voices is not about choosing between right or wrong, but about trying to learn something about the way

you act and its implications. I experience that Paul Broersen is receptive for my ideas, but that his concern is more about risk management.

Session 1

A first meeting with the think-tank is planned. I emphasized that for me a think-tank works in an open setting. To prepare for the first meeting I suggested a reflection upon what the members themselves would not discuss with the board and what subordinates supposedly would not discuss with them. I have invited Daniëlle Faassen, a dean of a faculty, rather recently appointed, coming from another organization and thus with a fresh mind regarding our organization. Olivia Maas I invited because she is our ombudsman and often confronted with troubles in our organization. Furthermore I have invited two directors for educational development and policy of two different faculties, known by me as critical regarding our institutional policy. Their names are Dan Ebbers and Dolf Peters. Apart from his critical mind I invited Detlef Aarts, dean of a faculty, to include artistic possibilities of dissenting voices. Moreover, I invited Fiona Cornips, director Finance and Control, already known by the reader as a critical companion in my work regarding the performance agreements (chapter 5).

In the first meeting my colleagues express different reasons why they like to participate. Curiosity how hierarchy works (DF), concern about integrity (OM), needed quality of professionals (DE), experienced perversion of some policy (DP), consequences of unexpressed dissenting voices but practised obstruction (FC) and exploring the reality of factual and needed dissenting voices (DA) are their main concerns. Quite some topics are reviewed: the (classical) disconnection of shop floor and management, the present cynicism, indifference or unfamiliarity with the formal policy, the feel good way the UAS is presented in our internal and external communication, but also the hypersensitivity for negative feedback and the fear to give feedback. The fear of losing one's face might be strong from the top downwards and vice versa and might be one of the reasons for the distaste for the pedometers of quality control. Also an experienced contradiction between a needed pedagogical tolerance in education and the strictness of performance oriented policy, and the in praxis unmanageable self-organizing character of reality are not openly discussed. In discussing the self-experiences about the lack of dissenting voices topics as courtesy, fear, carefulness, power relatedness, cultural traditions, context and tactical avoidance of subjects are reviewed. It is also obvious that as a manager you have to deal with many different stakeholders, but as Detlef pointed out, in reflecting on his self-experience he wondered why for instance he did not discuss with the President of the Board that our last ceremony for the start of the year was a bad experience for him. And why he did not discuss his critical opinion about some contributions with the contributors. Experiences we all share!

Session 2

Detlef tells that he has found a moment to discuss his criticisms on our opening ceremony with a member of his staff who was co-responsible for the ceremony. An important observation is that to criticize you need a situation à deux to ensure a sense of

security. For a discussion with one of the members of the board he has not found an opportunity. In discussing why he has not found an opportunity issues like postponement of difficult questions, difficulties to be honest, hesitations to discuss things with the captain but also a felt growing inaccessibility for feedback or dissenting opinions by the President go by as an explanation. The acting of the board is experienced as more and more technocratic, focussed on the performance agreements and alienating senior managers by deciding and unexpectedly presenting topics in an unclear and inconsistent way. Deans and directors live under the impression that the members of the board are annoyed with critical questions and even exclude critical managers. It is the personal experience of Dan but also to be noticed during meetings of senior managers and reflected in the high rate of turnover in senior management. Fiona shares her experience, as relatively new in the organization she successively became amazed, irritated, fascinated and almost cynical about the way topics are (seemingly) not discussed, not evaluated or are organised in an arbitrary way. It seems as if the expertise of external advisers is more trusted than the present internal expertise. Although it is recognized that the pressure of external stakeholders is huge, it brings urgency and many obligations regarding accountability about. There is a dire need for a broad discussion, according to Detlef and Dolf, in which the sense and significance of the different topics of policy are discussed.

Back to the topic of dissenting voices it still is the question how this lack of discussion can be explained. Fiona did some explorations in her department. She encourages her colleagues to be open-minded and critical, notices that piecemeal people start to be more feedback-minded, but also recognizes that it took a colleague one month to give her feedback on an apparently unfortunate joke she had made. Often the secretary of the manager knows more about the criticisms and acts as a hatch.

The question whether everybody is afraid to be critical comes up. The reticence in being critical might be explained by feelings of vulnerability, by wanting to be a congruent person, by showing avoidance and tactical behaviour, by being loyal and the wish to uphold good working relations. Important seems to be a bit of a calculating approach in which everybody chooses his battles instead of fighting for every inch. Striking is the lack of tactical behaviour. As far as known deans and directors build no tactical coalitions and do not oppose in a strong way.

It is also acknowledged that it is not the board alone which brings about this situation. It is a common dynamic within management. It also is an interesting question how every dean or director manages dissenting voices, which is underlined by Olivia who is confronted with conflicts and complaints of members of staff from different departments. Good practices of inter-subjective evaluations might give a hint how to manage difference in opinions. Not everything is to be interpreted as a clash or opposition, a well-organized dialogue might help.

Acknowledging that we mostly talk about the reticence in being critical towards the board, it is decided that everybody tries to start a conversation in his surroundings about reticence in being critical or dissenting to explore what is implied. Moreover, it is considered to have a conversation with the board about the lack of dissenting voices, preferably on one topic like the feel good presentation of the UAS in our corporate magazine. For the next meeting we put the technical preparation of such conversations on our agenda.

Paul Broersen reacted affirmative: the board will enjoy such a conversation, because they see it as an important subject and want to reflect upon it with others.

Session 3

The main topic was to prepare the discussion with the board (due to her workload Fiona withdrew herself from this think-tank). Together we formulated some starting points, which I would discuss with the board. The proposed starting points are:

- 1 We want to avoid a 'we versus them' discussion, as we recognize that lack of dissent is a common phenomenon. Strikingly underpinned by Olivia who as our ombudsman hears us talking about our bosses the same way members of staff talk about their deans or directors.
- 2 In regard of point one it will be important to avoid talking in hierarchical levels, as if there would be some inequality in the importance of experiences.
- 3 We agree to discuss different but concrete topics. Concreteness makes them discussable. Mentioned are: the opening ceremony of the academic year, our corporate magazine, our yearly network day, formalisation of work relations by the introduction of a consignment sheet.
- 4 Concreteness also should implicate to discuss topics in connection with one's own experiences. Not about 'them' or in general terms about 'the faculty', but about your own experience regarding the topic.
- 5 The discussion should be explorative instead of reproaching or judging.

We find that the aim of the discussion should not be to find solutions for the topics which are brought up, but to have a meaningful conversation of why we all together are more or less unable to discuss difference of opinions regarding some topics and what consequences this inability might have regarding the content and quality of our work.

Board session

In January 2014 I finally have my long waited for discussion about dissent - not about the agenda for a meeting with the think-tank - with the members of the board, being Paul Broersen, Frans Custers (portfolio: finance and control) and Ella Rietkerk (portfolio: education and research). In due time they all have made attempts and experiences with trying to look out for dissenting opinions. To their experience it is hard to differentiate between sincere concerns or political games of people they discuss with. Sometimes they are lucky that a really sincere conversation evolves, despite the

always hierarchical relationship or habitual distrust regarding management. And sometimes the ascribed responsibility for everything to them is too easily taken for granted by people. They realize that to keep staying in touch with different opinions an ongoing attention is needed. What's more, dissent is also experienced as being at odds with demands of performativity, as results are wanted. A question asked was how can we discuss with each other without evaluating each other or assuming that we are being evaluated? The members of the board acknowledge that dissent is a tough subject which should not be institutionalized. Surprise should be accommodated. It has to do with openness, with the acknowledgement of differences and the preparedness to learn from each other.

Agenda

For the meeting of the think-tank and the members of the board an agenda is mutually settled:

- 1 We will start with an exploration on how to discuss with each other. It will be important to explore a topic and not to prove your point, to stay close to one's own experiences and to avoid reproaches.
- 2 We will discuss topics like the ceremony for the opening of the academic year, the UAS magazine, the amount of hours of contact for our students and our yearly networking day for companies.
- 3 We want to draw some conclusions about stimulating dissent/openness. The main question will be that apparently it is impossible to discuss about some issues with sufficient openness and what can be done about this situation. A follow-up meeting will be planned to reflect and to discuss opportunities.

April – May: the winding up

In the meeting, animated, rather safe and comfortable discussions a lot of topics passed in review. Dissent or openness was associated with a lack of broad discussion or critical reflection, negating or masking early warnings, working around instead of discussing subjects, and having or giving opportunities to discuss. In the discussion the generally experienced lack of openness was connected to a host of variables: hierarchy, increased instrumentality, speed and volume in policy, peer pressure and loyalty, resignation, individual priorities, lack of ownership, cautiousness, existing non-feedback habits, lack of quality of input, complexity of some subjects, no evaluative traditions, language games, maintaining myths, external pressures, bad planning and the lack of social interaction with meaninglessness as a consequence.

What surfaced was captured and summarized by me in the word: interruption. Meaning: interrupting what you are doing is needed, to create a chance to dwell upon subjects and after that then - maybe otherwise - carry on. Practical implications could be more time to reflect about what we are doing, for instance by reflective conversations, asking more often questions about the practicality of plans, less detailed planning or putting fake subjects on an agenda to surprise everyone with extra reflection time.

A next meeting will be planned to reflect on the consequences of this discussion ... work still in progress.

6.2 Themes for reflection

I am indecisive about this project, if it ever can be called a project. It starts with an assumed need for openness, based on internal research and motivated by some loose ideas concerning involvement, risk management or resilience. The project transforms into a formal one by a letter of the Minister and Secretary of State, although quasi-formal because it happened that the project is never defined or formalized as such. Throughout time the subject and targets of the project are moving but moving towards what? If there are no formalized targets, will there ever be an impetus to change something? The project preserves some elusiveness for me. And it is still not finished, if there ever will be a finish.

At the beginning of my project I assumed that it would be likely that existing hierarchical relations - which in my experience have an impact on the power relations in the UAS - would be an issue with regard to the project. Being acquainted with the perspective of a complex responsive process-approach buttressed that assumption. Of course this perspective has started to influence my way of working.

From that I did not expect that I or we could create an artificial free space where everybody would or could speak freely and frankly. I assumed that taking time to discuss a subject like dissent could help, at least to get used to the idea that this was an issue that could be discussed seriously. I assumed the discussions needed to be approached prudently by stimulating conversations step by step, because the subject and the relations are touchy. I was not in a hurry and there was no tight planning regarding time or targets. However the question then becomes if this way of working has had consequences for the course of the project. What about time as such in this case, as regularly projects have clear cut targets and clear cut time schedules. Did the lack of time-related planning give way towards another kind of result? Is there something to say about the idea of time and a complex responsive process-approach?

However, the narrative still begs the question whether I still fooled myself in assuming that a rational discussion about the encouraging of dissent could be possible. Power is about hierarchy and control and as such the subject of this project. Power influences or frames the embarked on discussion about power. Discussing the need of openness is discussing mutual relations which are at stake in the discussions itself. I wonder if this project is viciously weighed down through which every discussion about power is in some way determined by existing power-relations among the involved.

When an organization is defined as '... a collective bending of individuals wills to a common purpose.' (Clegg et al., 2006: 2) it is obvious that within the process of 'ben-

ding' power is present. In social interactions power defines, constitutes and shapes the moment; power is a classical subject within organization and management theory. Accordingly power is an important and first subject for my reflection regarding this project.

6.3 Dissent within discourses on power and control

The appreciation of dissent is intertwined with the way the realization of policy in an organization is approached. Are dissenting voices appreciated? Is there something to learn from how dissent is appreciated during strategy development within organizations? Building on recent research regarding participation in the development of organizational strategy (Mantere and Vaara, 2008) it is possible to explore different appreciations of dissent. I use their research as a means for reflecting upon dissent and power. Strategy as such is not my object of reflection.

Current discourses on policy development

Mantere and Vaara's research is about the formal development of strategy as a blueprint for the deliberate policy of an organization. Apparently the strategies are developed during special organized processes in the organizations. Mantere and Vaara distinguish 6 different discourses about strategy development, of which 3 impede and 3 promote participation. They emphasize that in reality discourses coexist and overlap. Discourses support the legitimizing and naturalizing of the way 'things' are organized and thus the way the participation of different organization members is appreciated. In table 2 (page 156) their findings are summarized. To illustrate I have completed their findings by connecting the discourses with current topics regarding change management.

With the discourses promoting participation Mantere and Vaara highlight recent practices of involvement of organization members in the design of the strategy. However, by suggesting that these discourses do not produce some sort of resistance within the organization, they overlook the existence and impact of power differences. More specifically according to them these participatory discourses "... can provide effective means for resistance against hegemony and exclusion." (Mantere and Vaara, 2008: 355). Apparently these participatory discourses are supposed to restrict managerial hegemony and exclusion.

From their emancipatory point of view organizing engagement appears as a panacea for quite some organizational processes. Their research suggests that dissent is absent if engagement is provided for. Apparently, for Mantere and Vaara engagement incorporates dissent.

Experiences in my wiki-project (mentioned in chapter 3) in which I promoted engagement with the development of our strategy through the use of social media, oversha-

Table 2: Different discourses regarding participation in strategy development

Impeding participation	Characteristics	Current topics
Mystification	Strategy as a grand vision (secretively) defined by top management Implementation by cascading and compliance Reproduction of power position top management and of nonparticipation of organization members Acceptance coupled with cynicism and sarcasm	Power-coercive change leadership strategy (Szabla, 2007); Prescriptive (Mintzberg et al., 1998); Spiritual (Suominen, 2009)
Disciplining	Strategy as a military or educational task of top and middle management Implementation by rules, procedures, punishment and internalization of roles Reproduction of power position management and of nonparticipation of organization members Acceptance coupled with frustration and paranoid feelings	Anglo-Saxon style of management (Loo et al., 2007; Weggeman, 2003); Power-coercive change leadership strategy (Szabla, 2007); Prescriptive (Mintzberg et al., 1998); Militaristic (Suominen, 2009)
Technologization	Strategy as given and controlled by top management Implementation by systems to specify and measurement of performances Reproduction of power position management and of nonparticipation of organization members Acceptance coupled with feelings of alienation	Anglo-Saxon style of management (Loo et al., 2007; Vijverberg and Opdenakker, 2013; Weggeman, 2003); Rational-empirical change leadership strategy (Szabla, 2007); Strategy maps (Kaplan and Norton, 2004); Planned change (Cozijnsen, 2004); Prescriptive (Mintzberg et al., 1998); Mechanistic (Suominen, 2009)
Promoting participation	Characteristics	Current topics
Self-Actualization	Strategy as a collective search or journey for meaning Implementation by in-depth reflection and participation (identification) Reproduction of open expert culture Acceptance: nothing mentioned about	Un- and re-learning (Homan, 2005); Deregulation dominant language games (Feltman et al., 2010); No management of professionals (Weggeman, 2007); Know thy self (Es, 2009); Sparkling entrepreneurship (Zevenbergen, 2006); Descriptive (Mintzberg et al., 1998); Humanistic (Suominen, 2009), (Torbert, 2004)
Dialogization	Strategy as a dialectic or dialogue of top-down and bottom up Implementation by guidelines and action plans Reproduction of position management and expertise organization members Acceptance: nothing mentioned about	Normative-reeducative change leadership strategy (Szabla, 2007); Rhineland style of management (Loo et al., 2007; Weggeman, 2003); Co-creation (Wierdsma, 2005); Socratic conversation (Kessels et al., 2007); Descriptive (Mintzberg et al., 1998); Humanistic (Suominen, 2009)
Concretization	Strategy as a cooperative effort of management, organization members and stakeholders Implementation by ongoing construction procedures and plans Reproduction of position managers alongside collective and distributive agency Acceptance: nothing mentioned about	Un- and re-learning (Homan, 2005); Rhineland style of management (Loo et al., 2007; Weggeman, 2003); Distributed or shared leadership (Dijkstra and Feld, 2012; Kessels, 2012); Descriptive (Mintzberg et al., 1998); Pragmatic (Suominen, 2009)

dow Mantere and Vaara's interpretations. Cloaked in concepts as 'wisdom of the crowd' (Surowiecki, 2004) and 'co-creation' (Wierdsma, 2005) at that time I hoped that a lot of colleagues would grab the opportunity to participate. I expected that public engagement would promote the identification of all involved with a new strategy and thus also would promote an easy realization. Things turned out otherwise: distrust and aloofness regarding management issues partly explained the lack of participation (Schutte et al., 2009). Contrary to Mantere and Vaara and based on my experiences in that project I doubt if dissent can be easily traded in for participation and engagement. Apparently another perspective is needed.

The research of Mantere and Vaara illustrates what Stacey (2010) calls the new jargon of management writers as they suggest that by definition participation creatively produces good outcomes. However, contrary to the in my view rather naïf conclusions of Mantere and Vaara, I would say that power is unavoidably present, also when a strategy is developed in a micro-oriented or emergent way (Groot, 2007; Groot and Homan, 2012).

Power & soft constraining: a panoptical perspective on encouraging dissent

From a leading critical perspective on organization and management studies the research of Mantere and Vaara expresses what Aardema (2010) sees as a recent trend in public administration: realizing the importance of soft, organic and incremental organizational development. Aardema wonders whether these soft approaches are wolves in sheep's clothes.

According to the perspective of Critical Management Studies (CMS) no wondering is needed. Within CMS it is argued that soft controls and soft managerial practices and policies have supplanted hierarchical and bureaucratic control, but still can be characterized as affirming managerial hegemony and exclusion. These practices lock people in (Alvesson and Willmott, 2012). Many organizations have become soft bureaucracies (Courpasson, 2000) or claim to be post-bureaucratic (Alvesson, 2013). Soft bureaucracies are organizations in which centralization of policy is sustained by the coercive force of so called external threats and ineluctable decisions, and stimulating competition between people (e.g. performance appraisals, growing number of temporarily assignments, project-based organization). Post-bureaucratic organizations claim to be decentralized, flexible and non-hierarchical, operating on the basis of networking, mutual adjustments and shared values. Clearly noticeable and face-to-face power mechanism are replaced by soft technologies and combined with increasing control and pressure on performances (Clegg et al., 2006). Control and power differences are made more or less invisible by hiding them in external inevitabilities, HR-instruments, inspiring visions and corporate values, and by declaring these instruments applicable to every high- or low-ranked organization member (Courpasson and Thoenig, 2008; Steffy and Grimes, 1992; Townley, 2005). They are labelled as transparency technologies (Levay and Waks, 2009), needed in the exotic, multifaceted bazaars organizations often are nowadays (Courpasson and Thoenig, 2008). Modern soft bureaucracies have

become 'glass cages' (Gabriel (2005) cited by Alvesson, 2013) in which every member of staff is kept in place by the transparency of its performances and the internalization of organizational values. In line with Foucault (1975) one can speak of the rise of the panoptical organization. Apparently the discourse of power has changed from external control on performances to self-control on ultra-performances, exactly because of all the emphasis on participation and invitation to speak out (Courpasson and Thoenig, 2008).

In line with what Elias (1969) saw as the hallmark of western civilization process, this intensifying of "Selbstzwang" (self-restraint) is not surprising. One can speak of organizational refinement of civilized behaviour. Power differences and a strong sense of interdependency nourish the correctness of organizational behaviour for both supervisors and subordinates (Soeters and Iterson, 2002). From the perspective of CMS the discourses promoting participation can be interpreted as a way of centralization of policy by involving as much as many organization members in the development of policy. Participation in development of policy is to be interpreted as tactics of complicity (Metze, 2009), cloaked in empty fashionable concepts like 'empowerment' or 'mean and lean-management' (Alvesson, 2013).

Emancipatory perspective

The criticism of managerial practices from the CMS-perspective is nourished by an emancipatory perspective on human society (Alvesson et al., 2009b; Alvesson and Willmott, 2012). Emancipation will be realized if decision-making processes take direct account of the will and priorities of diverse stakeholders instead of only the financial and managerial priorities of the elite. Emancipatory transformation should promote greater autonomy and responsibility through which human interdependence instead of individualism can be realized (Alvesson and Willmott, 2012).

Nevertheless, an interesting emancipatory opening can end when people become locked in into unreflective thinking, causing them to give up their autonomy and to identify with the priorities of the managerial elite. This is illustrated by research from a CMS-perspective. Rebellious middle-managers became the successors of their former senior managers (Courpasson and Thoenig, 2008) and self-management turned into tight control of fellow workers (Barker, 2005). Therefore a critical reflection and a critical analysis from a totalizing historical perspective always will be imperative. Whatever it takes, local "... struggles ... must be appreciated as a medium and outcome of broader processes of transformation" (Alvesson and Willmott, 2012: 197). Apparently ordinary people are not able to be critical and blamed for a certain functional stupidity: "... a lack of reflexivity, substantive reasoning, and justification." (Alvesson and Spicer, 2012: 1196).

One way in and out

Being suspicious by nature (Mumby, 2004) CMS is all about structural managerial domination and hegemony. Even when organizational members are participating their

involvement will be evaluated as being made or willing to be an accomplice of managerial practices which preclude emancipation. CMS is a world of stark contrasts (Fleming and Spicer, 2008): managers versus employees, the powerful versus the powerless, the clever ones against the nitwits. It is as if within CMS existing hegemonial structures are there and there forever. Also, organizational members are regarded most and for all as a compliant species. From a CMS-perspective an organizational reality is pictured as if organizational members passively adjust their mind-sets to dominant organizational practices. Apparently fundamentally nothing changes; new developments like HRM and participatory involvement lock people in instead of emancipating them. To change their mind-sets towards their emancipation they are in need of critical experts (Alvesson and Willmott, 2012).

Back to my project about dissent

If I look at my project from a CMS-perspective I easily could develop feelings of futility and suspicion. First of all I would have to suppose that during the last one and a half year I have been kept busy (including payment) by my principals with a subject they already decided upon a long time before my project even started. Secondly I would have to suppose that a lot of people invested time, thoughts and energy but are - including myself - stupid enough not to see how we are locked into something which from a CMS-perspective is against our objective, emancipatory interests. And if the board-members would be the manipulators or the ingenious conspirators I even would have to consider that my meetings with them and the meeting of them with the members of the think-tank are brilliantly arranged performances of play.

If I would take this position of being manipulated I would have to doubt the intentions of all involved or even have to imply that senior managers have unearthly competences to manage other people. I seriously would have to fall back on a sovereignty-interpretation of power, in which is suggested that power is some sort of natural and exclusive possession of managers (Clegg et al., 2006; Homan, 2013). For the present I restrict myself to conclude that CMS-scholars - despite their own intentions (Alvesson and Willmott, 2012) - distrust managers rather deeply.

6.4 A paragrammatical perspective on the discussions

Is an organizational member a passive uncritical and compliant being? Are these members only consumers instead of producers of an organizational reality? From a CMS-perspective the consumer's perspective is obvious. Actually CMS departs from a classic essentialist perspective on power in which power belongs to someone and which can be deployed. The managers ('the bad guys') have the power over employees and employees need the power of the CMS-experts ('the good guys') to free themselves (Homan, 2013).

However, as mentioned before, the question remains how to explain that deciding on a strategy - vision, mission, targets included - has no consistent consequences for what will be done in an organization (Aardema, 2010; Brunsson, 1989)? If Homan (2005) states that up to 80% of all changes in organizations emerge spontaneously within polyvocal processes, one can hardly assume that an organization is crowded with passive consumers (see also Burnes, 2005). Research underlines that intended strategy has unintended outcomes in which for instance middle managers actively consume and transform the organizational strategy (Balogun and Johnson, 2005; Groot and Homan, 2012; Suominen, 2009).

Obviously plans, policy and managerial decisions do not enjoy a straight forward transformation into the daily organizational reality. Apparently the organizational Panopticons do not work properly, as far as a panoptical perspective departs from a rather linear view on strategy and implementation. One can interpret this lack of straight forwardness as a token of resistance to change from a social technological perspective on change management (Cozijnsen, 2004; Szabla, 2007), from a political point of view as opposition (Scott, 1990) or rebellion (Courpasson, 2011), or as a source of organizational resilience from an interactionist perspective (Aardema, 2010; Brunsson, 1989; Weick and Sutcliffe, 2007). Even rumours can be interpreted as a way of transformation of formal policy (Ginneken, 1999; Kimmel, 2004). Basically the question is: what happened in the discussions regarding dissent?

Different discourses

During the discussions about dissent aspects of different perspectives came into play. The involved tapped out of different discourses and thought over the different arguments without appealing to an unambiguous position. To clarify what I mean I highlight some issues out of the narrative. Table 3 gives a brief summary of used arguments with regard to different perspectives.

A social technological perspective is recognizable in a meeting with the board members, when stated by one of the board-members that dissent and discussion is okay, but that we can't afford to discuss every time too much and too long. Things have to be decided. From a social technological perspective it is imperative that change should be short termed, "... changing too slow must be prevented in any case." (Cozijnsen, 2004: 32). Planned organizational change is depending on management and control of the different phases of change and is tenacious in the belief that organizational development can be speeded up. Local subcultures, personal priorities, hidden rules and emotions are resistant obstacles for needed change (Cozijnsen, 2004). It is obvious that the used argument, through which the need for quick deciding is taken for granted, draws from a social technological discourse. Seen through the eyes of a member of the board who sees his or her many target-responsibilities as self-evident, it seems to be a logical argument. Although one might wonder if daily experiences do not point into another direction.

Table 3: Summary of used arguments

Social technological discourse	Political discourse	Resilience discourse
Corporate Critical Friend; corporate governance; constructive dissenting opinions; swearing an oath; rules to the extent of human beings; a deal is a deal; risk management; quality of professionals; performativity of policy; existing cultural and behavioural habits; complexity of subjects; instrumentality of policy; planning-process	Countervailing power; political cleverness; perversion of policy; obstruction; hierarchy; status; mutual relations; tactical behaviour; language games; myths; distrust; technocracy; behavioural aspects like fear, avoidance, vulnerability	To prevent mismanagement; dissenting opinions; company blindness; jestership; organizational reflexivity; reflexive conversations; reflexive evaluations; openness; integrity; discursive discussions; break off!

With political spectacles on my nose I see other dimensions in the discussions. Obvious hierarchy and control are there when 'safety to discuss' becomes a topic. Everybody realizes the paradoxical situation in which we try to discuss in openness about a lack of openness around certain subjects. A more striking exemplar is the difference in the way topics are discussed. In the think-tank someone uses the term 'perversion' or 'technocratic' to qualify certain aspects of policy. In my meeting with the board 'lack of trust' passes in review. But in the joint meeting these rather burdened terms are not used. If the joint meeting is to be qualified as the official meeting of different parties then I can see how Scott's concept of hidden and public transcripts is useful to politicize the meeting (Scott, 1990). The joint meeting was rather safe and comfortable; a respectable performance so to say. However, being in the own group other conceptions were used, but contrary to what Scott suggests, hidden transcripts are not a matter of subordinates alone. A superordinate exhibits the same behaviour. When people join, people act as chameleons and blend into the situation (Homan, 2005). This 'blending in' can be read as political behaviour, however – once again – should not be read as a one sided locking in by superordinates. In line with what Homan (2013) states, in my experience in the discussions onstage and offstage behaviour is exhibited by all involved.

From the perspectives of risk management or resilience, dissent has something to do with being perceptive for small differences. "Needed are perceptive ways of working which promote imagination, enrich experiences, provoke doubt about all expectations, give the ability to provide new significance to small disruptions of expectations, and facilitates learning which intensifies and deepens alertness." (Weick and Sutcliffe, 2007: 32). Weick and Sutcliffe list a number of activities which should be raised to be

resilient. Amongst others they suggest to stimulate diversity in analyses about processes in organizations including counter-analyses of existing practices, diversity in personnel and to stimulate a working climate where people feel safe to discuss problems or malfunctions. From a theoretical perspective resilience is not "... a technological device; rather it is an organizational or individual capacity meant to prevent dysfunctions emerging and to appear if something unwanted and (relatively) unforeseen happens." (Karlsen and Pritchard, 2013: 4). From the onset in the discussions about dissent resilience is a subject. Paul Broersen advocates this perspective from the beginning, in due course stimulated by the announced Ministerial policy regarding the responsibility to organize constructive dissent. The almost general wish to keep in touch with different opinions has to do with early warnings to avoid mismanagement. For instance for the deans: if a situation is discussed with the ombudsman they might have overlooked some serious problem.

In practice the discussions – whether apart or joint - appear to be a medley of arguments of different discursive backgrounds, which in the interactional processes are weighed, dismissed, forgotten, repressed, elaborated upon and combined into intentions and proposals. To state it otherwise: neither there were pure social technological, rebellious or resilient participants, nor is what happened to explain by one of the perspectives. The different arguments, which I categorized into three discourses, are used in paragrammatical way, that is "... creatively, opportunistically and individualistically. In this, they resemble cooking recipes and cookery books, which different users employ or experiment with in widely differently ways, for widely differing ends." (Gabriel, 2002: 134). Homan (2013) speaks of the presence of a lucky dip of arguments within organizations, an abundance of arguments of which participants draw from in their local conversations. These arguments are 'there' to help to develop a position in the discussions and out of which in the end more or less shared themes emerge. Apparently, the three different perspectives taken apart did not correspond with the evolving practice of existing persons involved in the discussions. In practice everybody and everything was or used a bit of everything. The three theoretical perspectives as such confound their abstractions from reality with tangible practices, in which the theoretical perspectives have an argumentative value and are used in the power play.

Given the results of the discussions up till now I think that all participants operate practically from a multidimensional perspective on the subject at hand. The discussions in the groups are a wisp of situations in which arguments pass around unevenly. If I look at power as the subject at hand, I experience that dissent as a topic in its different dimensions - resistance, opposition and resilience - passes around, but up till now that none prevails. To explain what might have happened up till now a framework is needed which in some way goes beyond the different positions.

6.5 On uncertainty and time from a complex responsive process-perspective

To reflect upon what happened during the paragrammatical discussions in my project, I explore the potential of uncertainty and time within a complex responsive process-approach. There are different reason to explore dimensions of uncertainty and time.

In reflecting on the narrative it is obvious that the way in which the discussions evolve are unforeseen. Throughout time the subject and targets of the project are moving. Although agenda's are made, meetings evolve otherwise than planned. It is as if the subject dissent leads a life of its own. It appears that none of the involved has a clear perspective on what the subject comprises and none of the involved has a clear agenda on what should come out of it. And even if perspectives and agenda's would have been clear, the outcome of the discussion would have been unpredictable. I think that the precautions the think-tank takes before entering the discussion with the board, indicates far more an expectation of passionate discussions than the kind of conversation that evolved in reality.

Uncertainty is present in different ways. Given the way the discussions evolved I can speak of uncertainty in an ontological and epistemological way at the same time, as it becomes clear that something unforeseen comes out of the discussions because of the discussions. Uncertainty is also present in a political or psychological way because of the efforts everybody takes to prevent a derangement of the discussions. Uncertainty is present with regard to the subject. From the beginning there is some uneasiness and unfamiliarity about the feasibility to discuss such a subject. I call that a managerial uncertainty.

Managerial uncertainty

To explain I want to draw attention to an in everyday life common, but generally taken for granted social or symbolic context of different positions. I want to draw attention to what Elias (1982) calls the fifth coordinate of human action: what people do together is entangled in a symbolic figuration which people more or less share. Whatever the differences are, whatever the conflicts or whatever the agreements are, some sort of symbolic interpretation of social reality is shared. This symbolic figuration is a construction in time (Tabboni, 2001). This is what Elias calls a symbolic figuration, a figuration which does not need to be homogenous, but in which the heterogeneous parts are mutually interdependent and, alternately and continuously constitute each other. Still full of possibilities how things will evolve. The symbolic figuration can be compared to what Homan (2006) calls the social fabric of relations among different constructions of meaning. Every construction "... is swimming in a kind of bath of ready-made meanings which elsewhere already are construed." (Homan, 2006: 33). 'Elsewhere' can be interpreted as historically, (sub-)culturally, traditionally, socially, locally or organizationally embedded or coming from next door. This social fabric works as some sort of an implicit common sense. For instance on a very general level

it is common sense that we are human beings. An example more specific in my narrative is that the involved people share the idea that they are working in Higher Education within the same UAS.

I think there is a symbolic configuration which holds the discussions of the involved in the discussions about dissent together despite the different positions. It is uncertainty. It is uncertainty expressed in differences of opinion about the (best) way to organize and to manage the UAS, about the ongoing criticism on results and the uncertainty about if the chosen solutions will bring what is hoped for. This uncertainty encloses differences in opinions. However, the differences are limited by the presence of other opinions of others and tied together within the symbolic figuration. If there are to detect traces of a panoptical psychological pressure, these traces are to detect in uncertainty. "Be sure to be evaluated, but never when and against which criteria", that is in a nutshell the psychology of the Panopticon (Foucault, 1975). The mentioned before ongoing public debate about Higher Education, the introduction of performance agreements, the refinement and need of instruments of measurement and control, in brief, the experience of permanently being evaluated brings about uncertainty about what and how to do. Talking is a way out of uncertainty; it is about coordination and control.

The discussions about dissent fit into this perspective. In a global sense the theme was if 'we' were better off if dissenting opinions were heard. Of course there were different opinions about the theme and different solutions to reduce uncertainty. To reduce uncertainty it was even attempted to exclude existing hierarchical relations, which normally function to reduce uncertainty by dividing responsibilities. However, the discussions up till now did not lead to a measurable solution and I doubt there ever will be. Uncertainty, power and conversational reduction of uncertainty will always be there, will be continuously going on. To start reflecting from that perspective is what makes a complex responsive process-approach a valuable alternative to explain what happened.

I relate uncertainty to time because whatever the uncertainties are, provisional and temporarily conclusions are arrived upon, while being altered thereafter, and thereafter and so on. Temporarily there are outcomes, though contrary to conventional expectations different in terms of passionate discussions on power relations and different in terms of measurable targets or a project-plan.

A complex responsive process-perspective on the discussions about dissent

A complex responsive process-approach offers a perspective in which a multitude of perspectives is acknowledged without the intention of becoming normative regarding a one way solution or explanation for what happens in real life. The connection of complexity, responsiveness and process-orientedness marks a complex responsive process-approach. As indicated in chapter two foundational concepts of this approach are predominantly found in natural sciences emphasizing irreversibility of time and

evolution (Prigogine, 1996; Prigogine and Stengers, 1988), figurational sociology (Elias, 1969) and interactionist psychology (Mead, 1934). From a naturalistic point of view we are living in a world that is defined by probability, and thus a world which is uncertain and unpredictable (Prigogine, 1996). Despite the existing order which emerges in processes of self-organization of multiple elements, we live on an edge of chaos (Homan, 2005; Zuijderhoudt, 2007). Transferred to our social and organizational reality the science of complexity has its focus "... on how random connections between people and the simple decision rules they use can lead to complex global patterns of behavior taking the form of new strategic direction and organizational renewal." (Stacey, 2012a: 25). From a complex responsive process-perspective the focus is on how out of local interactions among people global patterns arise. These patterns provide order but due to on-going responsive processes change all the time. The work of Elias, Foucault and Mead helps to understand the micro-dynamics of power and responsiveness in local interactions.

According to the complex responsive process-perspective power is omnipresent. Only apparently power is absent in the project-discussions, despite the respectable way the discussions evolved. However, for this perception one needs a different perspective on power. In line with the civilization-hypothesis of Elias (1969) and the concept of micro-power of Foucault (1976) power is indissolubly present in all human interactions. In the mutual defining of a situation as real, power continuously is present in which definitions gain and lose ground, or in a more general sense in the way a more or less negotiated perception of the situation is evolving. In human interactions power works in an enabling and constraining way, by including and excluding aspects and thereby producing order (Stacey, 2012b). However, order which is not conscious and more or less rationally planned, but a temporarily result of the interactions including stabilizing and changing power figurations.

Around the subject of dissent language games are played concerning countervailing power, openness, dissenting or even constructive dissenting opinions and voices, and due to my unfamiliarity with the English language even the urban expression 'back-chat' passed in review. If the consequences of a definition of a situation are real (Thomas and Thomas, 1928) from a power perspective it really matters which definition prevails in its social construction. Moreover, as clarified with the concept of hidden and public transcripts (Scott, 1990) it is obvious that which definitions or concepts are used depends on the presence of real others in the situation. The factually used language is a matter of responsiveness.

So, if only within the safety of the own group expressions like 'technocratic' or 'lack of trust' were used, is the explanation of what happened then cunning and strategic behaviour? Were we behind our masks of respectable and civilized behaviour calculating and estimating what to say with what effect? Were we desperately controlling our situations? The ground-breaking work of Mead supports answering these questions. In maybe what we nowadays would call a social constructionist approach (Ger-

gen, 1999) Mead exemplifies that our identity, those who we are, is depending on the actual situation in which we find ourselves. What we do, what we say or in general how we act is not depending on some inside and observing command-centre. How we act is a matter of responsiveness among those present. Who we are, our self "... is not something that exists first and then enters into relationship with others, but it is, so to speak, an eddy in the social current and so still a part of the current." (Mead, 1934: 182). Through and through we are social beings, both in what we actually do and what we learned before. What we learned before are what Mead calls our 'me's', the attitudes of what we learned about and from others. Nowadays concepts like scripts, frames, prototypes, modules, defaults or scenarios would be customary as a label for attitudes (for an overview see Dennett, 1991). However, it is important to underpin that these 'me's' are provisional, depending on what is going on and not some sort of awaiting indisputable recipe for use. "The 'I' as a response to (a) situation ... is uncertain." (Mead, 1934: 176). As elaborated upon in chapter 4 Mead's perspective offers a perspective to see social interaction as a contagious (Hatfield et al., 1994) and interdependent process of taken-the-attitude-of-the-other and not as some insidious or panoptical game. However, it is a game with power as immanent in all local interactions.

The way the discussions about organizing dissent in the think-tank, with the members of the board and with all together evolved, clarifies the combination of power and responsiveness. How we considered each other before - for instance in ascribed and formal status, due to former experiences, the present institutional context, and our mutual habits - is potentially present; for instance exemplified by a remark that the think-tank was composed of some 'usual suspects'. When in the discussion ways were sought to reduce hierarchical impact, we acknowledged existing patterns and at the same tried to transcend them. No one would have been able to predict how things would evolve, although attempts were made for instance by formulating starting points for the discussion of the think-tank and the board (see session 3). Although these starting points should have conditioned a safe space to discuss touchy topics, the starting points paradoxically reinforced existing hierarchical relations, maybe thus leading to an animated but comfortable session. In principle one wrong word could have caused a derailment in the discussion and might have lasting consequences for mutual working relations. However, the result is as it is: a respectable meeting produced by those present. Even when I tried to stir up things by recapitulating the criticism on the last yearly opening-ceremony and even when in the discussions before the joint meeting far more critical notes were made.

When I look back I feel that – although being the chairman – I was part of series of social interactions which surpassed my unilateral influence. Things happened in a way no one foresaw or wished for, and in small talk afterwards things were experienced as respectable instead of critical.

My feeling of being surpassed in the situation can be elucidated by notions which belong to the domain of complexity. These notions paint a different portrait how

issues evolve out of social interactions, a portrait of self-organization. Especially in chapter 3 I elaborated on that in regard of the internal branding programme. Another of these notions within complexity is about time; a different perspective on what time is that provokes another perception on what happened during the project.

Some reflections on time

Normally our efforts would have led to conclusions and to planned actions. But it did not and if I had suggested that there were some sort of measurable results, I would have concealed my feelings of indecisiveness. Moreover, I would have passed the confusion of at least one of the participants, and maybe passed the confusion of my readers because my narrative stops in the middle of nowhere. Conclusions and planned actions would have suggested that we understood what we did and we could bring a first phase of this project to an end.

We are used that there is a beginning and an end of a project which are played off within a certain time. At the beginning we normally define a starting point, at the end we expect to have a solution. What we mostly forget is that both the beginning and the end are created as and create isolated moments in ongoing processes. Deeply ingrained is that time is a measurable quantity, which is directly connected to the idea that within a certain amount of time we are able to plan and finish things. This quantified or productive idea of time belongs to us as a second nature, although it is 'only' a specific constraint within our minds as evolved in western civilized society (Elias, 1982). This productive idea of time is different from the experience of time as we have in our everyday actions and is different from how the discussions around dissent actually evolved.

One of the participants in the think-tank more than once asked me if the discussions in the think-tank had brought me what I wanted. My answer was that I did not have specific targets on my mind, neither regarding the subject of dissent nor the outcomes of the discussions. A better answer would have been that my targets or outcomes changed in due time of the discussions, even the idea that this was a useable project. Starting with the idea of being appointed as a corporate jester or as a Corporate Critical Friend, next to stimulate organizational reflexivity, proceeding with enabling dissenting opinions and as yet ending with dissent shows the way my targets moved. Somehow I had plunged into these discussions and to what they would lead became undetermined. At the same time I struggled with this vagueness, socially conditioned by the assumptions that efforts will have to lead to something concrete and that my principals expect measurable results. My colleague who asked me for the results probably acted within the same habitus, from her part even with the expectation that I was developing a model for dissenting communication. To support me she pointed me to a model of upward management, inspired by CMS (Hetebrij, 2006).

In due course my most important intention became to advance an open-ended discussion concerning dissent. Partly because I understood that this was a touchy sub-

ject, partly because I had set out on uncharted territories. Most of all my intentions changed due to the interaction in the discussions with the members of the think-tank and the board.

Besides, if I would have known the outcomes why bother about involving other people in discussions? Because my research up till then had made me more and more susceptible for the uncontrollability of interactions and outcomes I also relied on that time would tell; something which 'time' did and did not. It depends on how time is defined.

Time tells

Within a complexity-perspective time is approached as an ongoing process in which patterns evolve, change and in due time disintegrate. Time is interpreted as continuous, experienced in processes of local interactions out of which temporary coherent patterns emerge (technically called self-organization; (Stacey, 2012b). There is no exact end and there is no exact beginning of things, there are only temporary figurations. From this perspective organizations and projects as mine are to be seen as eddies in the currents of time (Mead, 1934) in which things are brought to mind and if possible are organized.

The emphasis on local conversations is an emphasis on the here-and-now of social reality. According to Mead (1932) we are living in the present, in a continuous stream of acting. The present is a continuous experience, interrupted if hindrances come on our way. In reality our daily life is not a continuous experience, but experienced as full of hindrances. For instance if we meet someone with a different opinion, we have to deal with a hindrance. To overcome the hindrances we act, most of the time by entering into conversations. The discussions in the think-tank, with the board and with all of them together are to be seen as conversations in which different opinions - hindrances - are dealt with, to restore a continuous undisturbed experience of the present.

However, in the very moment of acting we also (re)create our past and our future. What we were and what we become is changing. In the conversations we reconstruct our past based on our new experiences and new experiences produce other expectations about what the future will or should bring. In the interruption of the continuity something new emerges, something new which is not to be reduced causally on the past. "Even the statement of the past within which the emergent appeared is inevitably made from the standpoint of a world within which the emergent is itself a conditioning as well as a conditioned factor." (Mead, 1932: 46). From this perspective my moving targets from corporate jester towards dissent can be interpreted as an ongoing reconstruction of what is at stake and what should be done due to the ongoing conversations with all the involved. In the present I was part of a self-organising process.

If you approach organizations and projects as quantifiable then this project about dissent is a failure. From a quantifiable perspective an organization is a logic organisa-

ble, more or less constant phenomenon which can be managed in more or less rational ways. The result of the project is nil and maybe another example how public money is spilled in Higher Education.

However, I think the money is spent well. Dissent is an important issue - given the criticism on Higher Education and the announced Ministerial measures - and it is important to understand about what we were talking and what the possibilities would be.

In a process-like perspective an organization is approached as an evolving and uncertain phenomenon which is what people do. In a process-like fashion an organization is approached as far more a narratively than a managerial effort. If you want, a far more discursive or conversational effort, however with no guarantee on a planned success. Then conversations of people are interpreted as trying to understand what you are doing. However, understanding takes places somehow on a different - not quantifiable - timescale. It is to imagine as a timescale in which uncertainty and unpredictability are seen as basic for the emergence of something new. Maybe something unexpected, something surprising emerges which cannot be reduced in a causal way to what preceded it. Maybe the project makes a difference somehow and somewhere. Novelty comes out of differences, not out of dissent (Dalal, 2012; Mowles, 2011).

This process approach of time is a defining characteristic of a complex responsive process-approach (Johannessen, 2012) and implicates a different approach of managerial practices. Instead of an organization one could speak of organizing, understood as "... essentially a conversational process, an inescapably self-organizing process of participating in the spontaneous emergence of continuity and change." (Shaw, 2002: 11). Our reality is understood as a conversational reality (Shotter, 1993). Management becomes taking close interest in what people are doing, will be far more iterative and self-reflective about what management is doing itself, will be about engaging in the politics of everyday life in organizations and will be to be aware of the richness and potential of experience (Groot, 2010b; Mowles, 2011). If experience is disregarded Prigogine & Stengers would articulate "... if the understanding of the world leads towards the denial of that what makes this understanding possible ... that is no miracle but an absurdity!" (1988: 48).

6.6 Yet a happy end? The challenge "to interrupt"

Although I broke off the narrative at a point where no joint conclusions were drawn, my reflections on time have a connection with what happened in the joint meeting of the think-tank and the board. I wrote that what surfaced in the meeting I captured in the word: interrupt! It came to mean to interrupt what you are doing, to take the time to dwell upon the subject and then carry on. Practical implications could be more reflexive conversations, asking more often questions about the practicality of plans,

less detailed planning or putting fake subjects on an agenda to surprise everyone with extra reflection time. Moreover, from some of the involved I learned that their participation in the project had changed the way they thought about their work and the way they organized meetings in their department in a different way. And as far as everyone is concerned discussions about dissent will be held every half year. Just to explore what it is to deal with dissent.

There will be no final solutions of this project. I think the project is its own result as far as we keep on trying to understand what we are doing.

6.7 Reflections in hindsight

The narrative is about potential company blindness, about power, about involvement of members of staff in developing policy, against the background of derailments within organizations. It suffers a bit from a discord between dissent as a way of changing hierarchical relations, to prevent company blindness and to preserve the organization. The narrative, analysis and reflection in this chapter have developed into a rather explorative effort with regard to the subject of dissent. With regard to content there is a direct link with the chapter before, coming from the consideration to introduce a corporate jester. However, in due course of what happens a discussion about stimulating dissent leads to some ideas about interrupting to what we are doing. To organize some sort of reflexivity within the UAS.

From a complex responsive process-perspective reflections on uncertainty and time are introduced, as a way of trying to understand what happens. That there are no measurable results is not problematic reflecting from this perspective, although present-day policy requires proportional measurable results of investments. However, results are not excluded. One never can know what some small alternations in local interactions may have population wide.

The exploration of time in emphasizing that human life is living in the present out of which the past and present are socially constructed, deepens the notion of self-organization. The exploration of time related to the discussions about dissent exemplifies how whatever we do - including to do something as planning or preparing - is done in a continuous process in which everyone participates but which no one controls. However, also without controlling something comes out of it, maybe something even better. But who will be the judge of that? Basically for me it strengthens a belief in less planning from above or from the top, and more being involved in the conversational micro-politics of the UAS. If I reflect upon my wiki-project, as elaborated upon from the perspective of wisdom of the crowds (chapter 3) I would say that wisdom exists in what you are doing. Wisdom is not something to organize as if people can be seduced to give their wisdom away, or as if wisdom can be extracted from people, next be added and then prescribed as the solution of someone's problems. I have learned that

wisdom should be approached as the phronesis of people in their everyday life, not as the abstracted blueprint of strategy-maps, corporate mission or vision.

In the same way through the discussions in the think-tank, with the members of the board and with all of them together I learned that a CMS-perspective easily leads to a sort of paranoid idea of being controlled and manipulated. As if managers or members of a board in essence are extremely busy and competent with manipulating other people for the greater sake of the organization. The discussions about dissent clarified that every participant is searching and trying to find answers. That power is immanent in the micro-politics of the situation is evident, however not as the one-sided, top down and manipulative perspective as proclaimed by CMS. If I learned something from the discussions I learned that we are all just ordinary people.



Rumbling on performativity: a reflexive perspective on advisory work

A title at the front page of a thesis suggests that the subject of the thesis is clear from the onset and that the reader has to read the thesis with the main subject in the back of his mind. As indicated in chapter 1 the title is the outcome of my research process and ideally should have emerged to the reader in his reading, more or less the same way as it did for me during my research. However, empty front pages do not attract readers. To attract readers titles on the front page do have a habit of revealing the climax of the research, unintentionally suggesting that the research aimed at this climax. As if there is no research process to go through before concluding what the research has brought, as if there were no surprises.

In this chapter I will reflect upon my research, its process and its findings. Amongst others I will clarify why the chosen title offers a binding perspective on what I did. Moreover, this chapter has apart from its reviewing purpose, the purpose of synthesizing and gaining a more in-depth reflection on all the findings, the analyses and reflections regarding the major subjects which emerged during the research process.

In a general sense I will bring the four narratives (including the one about my taken for granted assumptions), the analyses and reflections in the different chapters reflexively together into a final plot. A plot about what is at stake in my narratives and what I fancy with my findings. I will try to provide answer to questions like how did rumbling on indicated by 'time for interruption' emerge from my research? What has 'time for interruption' to do with me, with the work I did and am doing? And in what kind of context am I doing that? What about advisory work and rumbling on performativity? Furthermore, there are questions about my responsibility as a researcher when I write about my colleagues, and reveal things from behind the scenes. How do I take responsibility for the potential consequences of my research? And of course there are also things to say about the chosen method. Is research from a 'personal' or from a complex responsive process-perspective sound research? What are its specific contributions towards the field of OMS? Are they useful? Are the findings different from other research?

To clarify the title of this thesis and to offer an in-depth reflection I have to answer the many questions which are relevant with regard to my research. More specific I will retake the three questions posed at the end of chapter 2 with regard to my movement of thought, the potential resonance of my findings and my ethical responsibilities as a researcher. For the answers to these questions I will depart amongst others from the set of criteria for rigorous radically reflexive research which I proposed in chapter 2. The three questions will be completed with questions regarding conclusions which can be made with regard to my advisory work, with regard to the contribution of my research to the field of OMS and with regard to doing research from a complex responsive process-approach.

Recapitulating, the questions to be answered in this chapter are:

- 1 Am I able to make plausible how - against the background of my beliefs and values - 'time for interruption', 'performativity' and 'bricoleur' emerge as a consequence of the analytical and reflexive efforts I have performed?
- 2 To what in-depth reflections and to what conclusions do the subjects 'time for interruption', 'performativity' and 'bricoleur' lead with regard to my advisory work and with regard to the UAS?
- 3 Do my narratives bear witness of being involved in social interactions and do they seduce the readers to take notice of and to identify with the research-findings?
- 4 Do I pursue my ethical obligations as a researcher regarding consent and controllability properly?
- 5 What are the contributions of my research to the (educational) field of OMS, embedded in doing research within a complex responsive process-approach?

For the answers regarding questions 1 and 2 I will elaborate and reflect upon how the subject of corporate jestership emerged and how it is connected to my taken for granted assumptions (chapter 3) and the subject of performativity (see 7.1 and 7.2). Moreover, I will elaborate and reflect upon how the subject of performativity emerged during the research and to what discussions it appears to be connected (see 7.3). Thereafter I will elaborate and reflect upon how the subject interruption emerged and how this is connected to the subject of bricoleur as a present-day interpretation of my advisory work (see 7.4).

The questions 3 and 4, regarding the resonance of my research and my ethical responsibilities will be answered according to the standards for radically reflexive research as developed in chapter 2 (see 7.6).

Question 5 regarding my contribution to the field of (educational) OMS will be answered more specifically from a complex responsive process perspective, including a perspective on further research (see 7.7 and 7.8).

7.1 My taken for granted assumptions on the move

Radically reflexive research demands to be reflexive about my own values and beliefs or my taken for granted assumptions, as it is postulated that these assumptions are unavoidably present in the research undertaken. The taken for granted assumptions are pivotal importance for radically reflexive research. So a topic of reflection has to be what my involvement was with the way the different discussions as described in the different narratives evolved. After all, my involvement had some consequences for what happened in the UAS and for what evolved as subjects in the research. Being involved as an adviser to the board and being involved as a researcher it is time to return to my taken for granted assumptions (chapter 3).

Before returning to them I recapitulate what I came to understand during my research as a complex responsive process-perspective regarding the way taken for granted assumptions can be understood. This recapitulation crystallizes the rather social constructionist perspective on social interaction, a perspective which was explored by reflecting on the narratives.

The value of taken for granted assumptions

Taken for granted assumptions are to be compared with what I called the 'pre-knowing' in chapter 6. Taken for granted assumptions are to be interpreted as a collection of entangled experiences which evolved and evolve throughout someone's lifetime. Taken for granted assumptions are what we learned and ongoing learn in interaction with and from others in specific situations. They are what Mead (1934) would call my organized attitudes, my 'me's'. They may be seen as prefab-webs of sense-making (Homan, 2001).

Taken for granted assumptions are through and through social and keep on changing due to ongoing social interactions. The most gripping illustration of the socialness of taken for granted assumptions is the fate of feral children. Grown up among animals or totally isolated from other human beings, these children are experienced as antisocial, restless and amoral by us (Newton, 2002). However they have managed to survive in their different world in developing effective taken for granted assumptions. Just to note: in the beginning of my research where I started to try to reflect from a complex responsive process-perspective made me feel a bit feral.

Seen from a Foucaultian perspective the 'me's' bring into interaction what someone experiences as normal. Generally speaking the 'me's' bring into interaction what someone has learned about how reality – whether a social or natural reality – is and at the same time what to expect in this reality. The 'me's' are plural and vary about behaviour, values, relations, expectations and traditions in all sort of circumstances. My 'me's' are the narrative which I am. I am a narrative which ongoing evolves during my life in interaction with others. So I am the same and not the same at the same time.

Taken for granted assumptions could be labelled as someone's bias, a collection of generalizations - or prejudices if you want - regarding what evolves. However, disapproving of them would imply disapproving of whom you are in favour of some idealized nonhuman objectivity. On the contrary, taken for granted assumptions should be approved as the conditions of living and working together, as which enables meaningful conversation among people (Dalal, 2012). Without a confined history of ourselves we are nobody (Beauvoir, 1946). Or otherwise stated: only by being someone one can be worthwhile for other people or in your organization.

According to Mead (1934) organized attitudes (the 'me's') become activated within social interaction. In the interaction the 'I' emerges. The 'I' is the present and identifi-

able selective mixture of attitudes, who a person is during and due to the interaction. The 'I' is at the moment of interaction an identifiable, a shifting and an unsettled presence amidst other shifting and unsettled human beings. The 'I' "... is only the ultimate effect we can recognize, but the differences are due to the gestures of these countless individuals actually changing the situation in which they find themselves, although the specific changes are too minute for us to identify." (Mead, 1934: 203).

Reflexive efforts may help to identify some changes, or more specifically: reflexivity may clarify how I acted in the actual situation, given the potential presence of many taken for granted assumptions. The concept of intersectionality from auto-ethnographic origin appears to be a useful perspective on this plurality as it implies "... exploring how multiple aspects of identities simultaneously are manifested within interactions with others." (Boylorn and Orbe, 2014b: 18). Intersectionality emphasizes that social interactions are no one-to-one interactions of all assumptions, but are interactions in which a multitude but selection of assumptions of the persons involved are present at the same time. At the end who we are, the 'I' "... comes into the level of our experience only in the completion of the act." (Mead, 1934: 203).

A reflexive reconstruction of my acting: retaking the narratives

Looking back to how I worked – how I completed my acts – and why, is self-revealing because I experience how what I did and do is an alternating mixture of different standpoints – a fuzzy cocktail – in different situations with different people. I experience the bleeding borders of my identity (Alexander, 2014) through which my supposedly strong opinions, convictions and responsibilities take shape in the acting of the moment. For every narrative I will make a connection with my taken for granted assumptions as described in chapter 3. To call my taken for granted assumptions to mind I briefly recapitulate them.

Reflexively (chapter 3) I observe myself as a bunch of different and inconsistent assumptions. My managerial assumptions regard notions about emancipation-oriented involvement and genuine participation of members of staff (e.g. co-creation), about an instrumental approach of including other members of staff (e.g. wisdom of the crowd), and about being oriented on efficiency and effectiveness. Regarding my competences I notice managerial competences of coordinating and leading, and a reflexive orientation on my work. I am apprehensive for what happens in social interactions and 'suffer' from some sort of oversensitivity for what happens. I assume that somehow this 'made' me an observant and participant of the interactions.

Identity-management

In the narrative about identity-management I see this bunch of different and inconsistent assumptions back. Taking my responsibility for managing the project in a proper, consensus-oriented way and aiming at practical results, in the discussions I also emphasized the differences between management and members of staff, in such a way that these differences were acknowledged in the evaluation. Politically I forestal-

led a discussion about an internalization approach, even started doubting the used model within the programme. Apparently my strategy was to bring the programme as close as possible to 'the shop floor' instead of even suggesting that we could inject the mind-sets of the colleagues with the true values. Although at the same time I realized that the identity-management programme was developed on quite a distance of the shop floor. I see that for my part I made the best of everything as a sort of compromise between what I prefer and what is assumed to be possible with an identity-management programme. My preference for involving as many members of staff as possible and my doubts about a rational approach of change made themselves felt. I even suppose and noticed that the others involved – apart from the institutional researcher – became more modest in their ambitions regarding the possibilities of an identity-management programme. Whatever, the way I reflected upon my acting together with the members of the learning group triggered question about my professional identity. Pointed the way I acted despite my bunch of inconsistent taken for granted assumptions towards acting as a jester?

Performance agreements

In the narrative about the performance agreements I apparently succeeded in producing a document while toning down ambitions. Dominantly for my part I propagated an approach in which we stay connected to what we are already doing, by staying connected to our daily activities and by pointing to our inabilities. More or less my acting was aimed at slowing down the amount of new policy, to guard members of staff from a next and new set of critical performance indicators. Instead of endorsing a planned change-approach after we had concluded the performance agreements, together with a colleague I propagated some sort of conversational self-organizing approach. I was running a project of which I felt restrained, convinced that these performance agreements are not a very effective way of improving quality of Higher Education. In producing the document for my part I somehow bridged the different opinions and interests of different people about content and ambitiousness. Precisely my bridging while showing doubts about the value and attainability of the performance agreements, ignited again a reflection about corporate jestership.

Consent about dissent

Strictly speaking I should have shown much enthusiasm in doing what was described in the narrative about dissent. After all, the discussions opened ways to reflect more or less openly about some touchy issues. In my mind I was very happy with the opportunities. I felt backed up in my calling attention for openness and acting as a corporate jester. I was well aware of the fact that we started to do rather brave things. However, still I acted aloof. Exploring touchy issues needs to be done carefully and cautiously out of respect for the vulnerability of the involved persons and practically because we are colleagues who have to move on jointly. Moreover, being on uncharted territory implicates that I did not know how things would evolve and that I should be able to adapt to new circumstances. In times I had to conquer my doubts that this was accepted, without being accounted for concrete targets.

In retrospect I interpret my involvement in the programme about identity-management my participation as a bit of surreptitious resistance against the idea or possibility to change the identity of organizational members by a corporate programme. In the narrative about the performance agreements I take a more explicit position against the possibility and desirability of these kind of agreements. Ending up in a narrative about dissent by explicitly raising a discussion about what we are doing instead of going on doing things.

Apart from what these narratives, the analyses and reflections clarified about my position as an adviser - see 7.2 - it may be obvious that reflecting from a complex responsive process-perspective while working together with many people also affected my taken for granted assumptions. I came to experience situations as real situations of real and interdependent people in which things evolve in a rather unpredictable way. By that I learned that at least the people I was involved with all struggled with what I came to label as the subject of performativity. However, a struggle not as an explicit and rational subject on our agenda, but entwined in daily social interactions. That performativity could become a more or less explicit subject on the agenda of some people has amongst others to do with my presumed acting as a corporate jester. And again, as reflected upon before, I experienced of being part of a self-organizing social interaction in which things emerge out of control of the involved.

7.2 Corporate jestership and performativity: from a joker to interrupting

Throughout the narratives some tenacity is striking. Partly it is my tenacity, supporting that starting from the project about identity-management attention is growing for what primarily is labelled as a need for openness. In due course the subject openness evolves into discussions about dissent. At least the discussions in the think-tank indicate quite some discomfort with something what apparently is lost in the way we organize our university.

To voice discomfort with what we were doing is part of my tenacity during the different projects. Somehow I was the voter against. In my role as adviser I was someone who tried to back out a bit of the contagious heat of the moment or to summon some cognitive dissonance.

Around this backing out the theme of the joker or the corporate jester emerged. Could I by the way I acted be qualified as the acts of a corporate jester? If so why and how? At the end the question even came to be if the UAS is in need of a corporate jester and how in that case a jestership could be fulfilled.

First encounter with the joker

In preparing conclusions for the board regarding the identity-management programme I came to ask myself whether in my position of an adviser I was a ventriloquist or a shrewd framer of the members of the board, or on the contrary a protean chameleon able to adapt to any sort of assignment. However, given the social contagious way conclusions were prepared and given my input as the voter against, it became worthwhile to examine if I hold a position of an organizational joker or fool. A quick exploration of the subject indicated that an organizational joker is accepted in a role of limiting the overestimating and putting into perspective of power (Kets de Vries, 1993), being reflective and critical about the business and glamour of ambitions (Raad, 2008) and to see things differently (Firth and Leigh, 1998). Three colleagues immediately backed up that somehow I act a bit as a joker. At a first glance apparently I sometimes acted more or less as an alienator, confidante, contrarian, truth seeker and mythologist (Firth and Leigh, 1998).

In general given the touchy character of discussing the existing identity of members of staff and their strong identification with the department they work for - which is potentially affected in an identity-management programme - my question became: who else as some sort of a corporate jester could have managed a programme with that much sensitivities, and undefined but unavoidable outcomes?

The rise and fall of a corporate jester and a corporate critical friend

In reflecting upon the narrative about the performance agreements the potential of a corporate jester was further explored. From time immemorial up to the breakthrough of democracy in the 19th century a jester was to be found in courts of kings of emperors, by mocking king and emperor to protect them against pride and conceit. Recently I learned that prophets fulfilled in the ancient Middle East that role at the risk of their own life (Achterhuis and Koning, 2014). I conjectured that from the 20th century the seat of jesters was occupied by management consultants, which amongst others were a protection against company blindness. The question became whether in due course consultants have developed their own business and commercial interests instead of being the needed critical friends of organizations. McKenna (2006) calls the growing dominance of the consultants' perspective the 'McKinseying' of organizations. Although there are quite some new consultancy practices emerging, which proclaim ground-breaking shifts in organizational practices (e.g. Feltman et al., 2010; Kessels, 2012; Weggeman, 2003), my question became if a foolish - globalized and McDonaldized - world is in need of another kind of adviser, "... an indispensable amalgam of roles which stimulates effective change and resolution in this foolish world." (Firth and Leigh, 1998). From different theoretical angles a corporate jester is approached as a moderator, mediator, negotiator, arbitrator and appraiser (Csermely, 2009), a weak link in an organization who advances some sort of stability in instable situations (Csermely, 2009; Korcsmáros et al., 2007; Mackenzie, 1998). I assumed that a corporate jester could be helpful in a transient reality by declining the idea of effective and overall change and final solutions, but rather by provoking reflexivity on what is at stake.

In retrospect it is to conclude that in some way I was provoking reflexivity during the drawing up the performance agreements, fed from the perspective of an uncontrollable reality and a poor history of planning change within the UAS. I started to see my behaviour a bit as gestures of a jester, emerging in the interactions with others. Apparently I was the only one who explicitly raised some principal questions regarding what we had or planned to do and therefore by others involved qualified as cynical. However, this cynicism was accepted, in due course expected and it even facilitated to formulate attainable results. As such my conclusion is that due to the interactions also the perspectives of the others involved in the discussions changed, generally speaking: became less ambitious. I rumbled on the obviousness of performativity. At that time a denomination as a jester or - more responsive - a corporate critical friend seemed to be a logical thing to do and was seriously discussed with the President of the Board.

The 1st demise of the corporate critical friend

The last narrative was about dissent. It was originated by intentions regarding a critical corporate friend, by uneasiness about recent incidents in educational institutions, by a wish to be aware of potential derangements in an early stage and by dissatisfaction about the results of formal policy. Originally this was captured in a wish for more openness. However, to institutionalize openness in a function like a corporate critical friend was abandoned in an early stage of the discussions. To develop an alternative was not an easy assignment. Discussions with and among the members of the board and with and among the members of a think-tank made recognizable that openness or criticism or dissent were wished for different reasons. A willingness to discuss about the topic emerged. It appeared that the people involved wanted to learn and wanted to discuss to seek ways to go beyond the illusions of every day. However first experiences showed that discussing beyond existing (hierarchical) relations and existing prescriptive agreements is not an easy thing to do. Two conclusions were shared: discussing should enable to interrupt the normality of everyday practices, and despite all uncertainty we should continue to discuss with each other (and potentially others) the topic of dissent.

It is remarkable that the subject of a corporate jester emerged due to discussions in the learning group, to what I did in my job as advisers and how I discussed the subject with members of the board and different colleagues. However, the subject of jester-ship also was put off the agenda due to the interactions.

Wanted: spurs against performativity

Being, not being and not becoming a corporate critical friend I participated in a process in which something interesting happened. It was and is a process in which discomfort and care glared through; discomfort with the way policy was designed and realized, discomfort with what I came to call performative-oriented policy. Care for doing the right things in the right way appeared to be leading in daily practice. The discomfort and care were shared for varying reasons. Uneasiness about controllability, about involvement and priorities, and ideological differences. I reflected upon it as a

panoptical psychological pressure, provoking uncertainty through the certainty to be judged, without knowing exactly how and on what to be judged. Shared was a feeling that sometimes more time or opportunity for reflecting on policy was wished for, in times that there is little time allowed for. Reflecting on how to realize dissent made reflexivity rise as an important issue.

In retrospect I see that the demands of and discussion about performativity are present in all the narratives, analyses and reflections. Apparently somehow in the UAS there is a sort of not well articulated – underground – discussion going on about the whereabouts of performativity or NPM. However, this discussion and the various positions which are taken by those involved in the discussions were not obvious at the beginning of my research. Performativity as a subject emerged in my projects, the subject became socially constructed in the discussions as apparently an important subject, although labelled as such by me.

Therefore next I will connect the subject of performativity to the UAS and with some broader discussions about performativity with regard to education. After that I will return to the subject of interrupting, as this subject emerged out of the many discussions we had about dissent. These discussions clarified a lot about the apparently underlying subject of performativity.

7.3 Swimming with the tide: managerial developments in the UAS

At first sight there is nothing special to the UAS. Nothing special in regard of other UAS's and nothing special in regard of organizational development. From the 1980s to be able to cope with societal and political developments through mergers the UAS has scaled up to an institution of around 14.000 students, 1800 members of staff, 9 faculties and 5 services in 2014. In due course systems of quality assurance are installed, accreditations have been organized, and high rankings are celebrated. Ongoing reorganizations of faculties and services – sometimes labelled as reshuffles – were accompanied by the introduction of a vision, a mission, a strategy, by the introduction of HR-policy including for instance performance appraisal and career-planning, and supported by a programmatic or project-based approach of organizational change. In due course my colleagues of the UAS learned and is still learning to use the new NPM-language of strategy, critical performance indicators, identity-management and core-values, scenario-planning, planning and control-cycles and budgetary accountability.

Instead of speaking about 'the UAS' from a complex responsive process-perspective it is more proper to speak of the people within the UAS who are busy with these subjects. For members of the board, for deans and directors, for advisers and programme-managers the development and implementation of the above is part of their concern,

still far away from the day to day educational operations. Of course with the intention that it will become part of the concern of everybody. For the other members of staff in education, research and the services it remains to be seen if these concerns are identified with, although somehow they are confronted with these subjects in their daily work. And it remains to be seen if board, deans, directors and advisers really share some sort of uniformity regarding these topics. My narratives point to something else.

From a managerial perspective a rich array of conventional means is employed to spread out the importance of the subjects. Speeches, best practices, purposive financial support, small presents, celebrations and extra allowances are introduced to stimulate the acceptance. Obliging agreements, individual performance appraisals and hierarchy are there to impose the acceptance of the policy.

The dance between top down and bottom up approaches

Around 2008-2009 as I mentioned in chapter 3 among managers and board there were discussions and attempts to manage the UAS in a less top down and more bottom up way. The establishment of advisory boards, the attempt to involve many members of staff in the wiki and the way the internal branding project was organized were signs of what was then called a wish for co-creativity. However, shortly after these projects a blueprint for reshuffling the UAS was presented by the board and discussed under time pressure. In 2012 in short time the performance agreements were concluded, which – again under time pressure – were operationalized with the help of strategy-maps (Kaplan and Norton, 2004), a concept which was unknown in the organization up till then.

Now I see that the way the UAS is managed has become a mixture of prescriptive and descriptive strategies (Mintzberg et al., 1998), in which participation is promoted within the seemingly rock-solid boundaries of what apparently must be done. This is another point what is missed in the analysis of Mantere and Vaara (2008), as they suggest that participative development of strategies can go anyway.

I have – metaphorically speaking – learned to see the dance between top down and bottom up approaches as alternating perspectives on how to involve members of staff in what has to be done. It is no free dance, going anywhere, but it is a dance within pre-given managerial responsibilities in which the manager assumes he or she acts as the choreographer of the performances. Sometimes the choreography aims at participating, sometimes it aims at implementation.

Managerial choreographers

Conventional managerial responsibilities stretch out on designing organizational structures, designing systems of information and control, installing and operating human resource systems, designing culture change programmes and developing appropriate political behaviour (Stacey, 2007). In the UAS managers (including me) seemingly have appropriated these responsibilities and are positioned as the ones to

address to when things go not as beneficial as planned or agreed to. On the other hand we are the ones who receive the extra allowances if things turn out unexpectedly well. On their turn managers translate the responsibilities, the addressing and the rewards to their members of staff and teams.

The choreography of the managers themselves is not written by themselves. As such the managers constitute and reconstitute managerial practices - functionalize social objects according to Mead (1923) - which are brought into Higher Education connected to developments around budgetary autonomy, accountability and governability as mentioned before. These practices are derived from commercial organizations, aiming at producing an entrepreneurial spirit within the institutions. NPM is used as the label for these managerial practices.

In the USA NPM spread its wings during the Reagan Administration (1981-1989) and in due course was exported to the European continent. From the 1980s it overflowed the public sector in the Netherlands (Karsten, 2008). The hard sell of NPM fits in a long tradition of transferring tools and techniques which are developed within management consultancies from North American origins to commercial and non-profit organizations (Hellema and Marsman, 1997; McKenna, 2006). Selling their tools and techniques is the way of earning money for management consultancy firms. Tools and techniques for which, by the way, is a lack of scientific evidence (Stacey, 2010); they are merely part of consultancy rhetoric (Sonnaveille, 2005). Which, again by the way, makes it remarkable why management traditions developed within enduring institutions as universities - for instance in the Netherlands the University Leiden exists since 1575, and the University Groningen exists since 1614 - are not brought to commercial organizations (McKenna, 2006).

The introduction of a NPM-way of thinking brought performativity as an imposed cult value into play. As if performativity is some ideal which should override other values and motives. In due course I came to understand that a plotline in my narratives is about performativity. In the next I will elaborate on how performativity or NPM is defined and criticized with regard to education. I will use these criticisms to reflect upon what happened with regard to the subject of performativity in my narratives.

On performativity: apparently an attempt of learnification of education

To call to mind I staged Lyotard (1979) as the one who sensed the rise of performativity in an early stage. Presumably he was standing in a long tradition of French criticisms on an American way of life (Zeldin, 1977). He pointed to the dominating calculating approach where efficiency rules and of which individualized responsibilities are dominant features. For me it is obvious that with NPM performativity is at stake.

In line with Scott (1998) one can see that performativity is fundamentally based on the idea that social reality can be planned. To translate that to organizational life, performativity is to be recognised if "... the most powerful organization practioners think of

an organization as a system and regard themselves as objective observers, who define problem situations and make decisions on what interventions they need to make in order to improve organizational performance and above all increase the earnings expectations upon which share prices depend." (Stacey, 2010: 12).

To perform in the sense of performativity four elements have to be taken care of (Scott, 1998). The first is that reality is administered in a simplified way in numbers. The second is the conviction that rational design will prompt improvement. The third one is an authoritarian relation between the rulers and the ruled. The fourth is that possibilities to resist the plans are limited. If these conditions are realized, success would be guaranteed, yet only in the eyes of the powerful practitioners. These four elements can more or less be recognised in developments within the UAS. In practice performativity - in the disguise of NPM - is assumed to have brought new orientations within and for management, through which the needed authority is indicated in line with soft constraining (Courpasson, 2006). Strategic and leadership skills, a more masculine-competitive attitude, loyal acceptance of the new way of working and more feminized caring skills (for instance coaching and counselling) are demanded (Thomas and Davies, 2005).

Policy in line with NPM is dominated by a strong wish for efficiency: with the least of efforts a maximum of results is to be achieved. To be able to account for efficiency in a UAS an educational reality must be turned into an accountable reality (Frissen, 2008) 2008. In due time in the slipstream of accountability a great part of the discussions and policy within the UAS became no longer dominated - at least among managers if they meet - by what we were doing, but by the amount of what we were doing and how to bring about a huge increase in the amount of what we are doing. Key elements of NPM (Lapsley, 2009) as mutual competition, hands-on top management, explicit formal measurable standards and emphasis on output controls were introduced in due course. From the discussions about the performance agreements (chapter 5) it is clear that from a governmental perspective the return of education in terms of the amount of certificates and fitness for the labour market has become decisive. The discussions about dissent (chapter 6) indicate that in practice this governmental perspective is contested.

Presumably performativity rumbles on in Higher Education and the UAS. Biesta (2012) calls that the learnification of education, if quantitative indicators for quality are confused with pedagogical - normative - quality as such. Learnification is the lack of discussion about the pedagogical purposes of education, it is as if within education only cognitive learning counts instead the attention to be paid to for instance good citizenship. Presumably it is education without vision (Vries, 2008), the triumph of emptiness (Alvesson, 2013) with pervert consequences to counterfeit quality (Carter et al., 2011; Raad voor Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling, 2011; Stacey, 2010; Wild, 2013). The dominant message is quite liberal: everything is one's own choice and one's own responsibility (Brinkgreve, 2014).

A recent example of rumbling on performativity within the UAS is the drawing up of a vision on education for the whole UAS. Primarily this was not organized as an opportunity to discuss why and how we are doing things, but organized in such a way that we could get our institutional accreditation. Its content hardly counts. Just having one is important.

However, based on my narratives, my analyses and reflections I notice that the perseverance by which performativity apparently is introduced can also count on some perseverance to resist it. Social reality appeared to be far more complicated in its 'realness' than the blueprint of performativity presupposes.

Performativity debated: a brief retrospect on the narratives

What I described as a wavering university as a context for my research (chapter 3) I can now specify as a context where managers (including me) among themselves were discussing the best way to stimulate developments – as defined or prescribed in our policy – within the UAS. Reflecting on my narratives I become aware of the fact that everybody also was (and is) keeping on appropriating the management-roles as dictated by NPM, and at the same time is feeling uncomfortable with what and how we are doing things.

As may be clear from the narratives, the appropriation of performativity is not one-way-traffic. The invasion of a NPM-orientedness in its different expressions is still debated. For instance as policy is experienced as technocratic and an identity-management programme as perverse. It is obvious that NPM is not something unilaterally decreed and wholeheartedly internalized by senior management. Even within senior management perspectives are different, alternating and inconsistent/situational. Specifically the 3rd narrative expresses a longing for something else.

Identity-management

Although an identity-management programme typically fits in NPM-oriented management, it becomes clear in narrative two (chapter 4) that what in practice is concluded and accepted is a mixture of different arguments, positions, interests, stubbornness, contradictions, tactical behaviour and ideals. The conclusions are not a straight forward, linear, logical and rational result. In the end the conclusions regarding the evaluation report have become an attainable compromise of many things. To illustrate this more specifically with regard to performativity, it can be noticed how during the discussions in the coordination team of the identity management programme, any talk about an internalization approach for values is skilfully excluded. Moreover, an interpretation of the evaluation in which is assumed that there are effective and causal relations between the identity management programme and the appropriation of the values, is downplayed. To state this otherwise: a suggestion that with more purposeful efforts the effectiveness of the programme could be increased has been eclipsed. The conclusions illustrate that performativity is a contested cult value.

Performance agreements

That performance agreements have to do with performativity is tautological. In narrative three (chapter 5) can be seen how performativity and performances become a social construction on the spot. There is nobody who applauds the decree of the State Secretary, however we start to make the best of it as soon as it is obvious that the agreements are unavoidable. Out of the Babylonian discussions through a mixture of self-belief, redefinitions, negotiations, happy coincidences, stoicism and tactical adaptation our performance agreements emerge. The discussion about the way and the efforts afterwards needed to account for the realization of the performance agreements illustrate how loosely a specific national and institutional policy is connected to daily practice. Of course efforts are made to connect policy and daily practice, more specific strategy-maps (Kaplan and Norton, 2004) are used to try to bridge that gap. Yet, the performance agreements feel a bit as an artificial but unavoidable interference in daily practice. In hindsight however, at the same time the performance agreements unintentionally appeared to be politically helpful to conclude some already long-lasting internal discussions about profiling the UAS. A blessing in disguise, so to speak.

Dissent

I think there is some veracity when it is stated that "to resist something also means to reify it, by privileging it as a meaningful area for political contest." (Thomas and Davies, 2005: 687). Resisting performativity in its different realities is acknowledging its presence and paradoxically confirms its importance. Whether one agrees or not. In this respect the fourth narrative (chapter 6) is a particular interesting narrative. In the discussions the involved were expressing their discomfort - although for varying and alternating reasons - with some subjects and with the way subjects were or had to be managed, about hierarchical relations and about present-day managerial responsibilities and identity. In my view the discussions evolved into a joint effort to seek a way of understanding to interrupt what has become reified and still keeps on being reified in our policy. It was seeking ways to interrupt what has become self-evident in the perspective on how to deal with policy. In my experience the discussions around dissent emerged into discussions to reach out imaginatively for or to open up different roads to follow. I could say that it was an attempt to get back to a narratively (Lyotard, 1979) or figurational (Elias, 1982) 'pre-knowing' in which subjects are undefined.

Surprisingly this reaching out for the narrative dimension of organizational life might be connected to a plea for interruptive pedagogy. The plea for interruptive pedagogy criticizes the approach of education as a production-facility of competent citizens because of its denying of the existential dimensions of human life (Biesta, 2012). According to Biesta an industrial orientation on education at least should be completed with educational practices aimed at the development of the student as a person.

As it appeared to be throughout the narratives about identity-management, performance agreements and dissent, performativity was at stake in the different discussi-

ons. As a subject as such performativity was not put on the agenda, but it was there in different remarks, worries and evaluations. It is interesting to notice that performativity is debated, criticized and accommodated to daily practices and far from being idealized as the preferable managerial way to act.

From our local discussions

For me it has become obvious that the assumed learnification of education (Biesta, 2012) can be recognized in the way the UAS, 'should' be managed, but that in practice this way of management is accommodated, criticized and if needed evaded. The way of working suggests a bit of hypocritical (Brunsson, 1989) muddling through (Lindblom, 1959).

From the narratives and the discussions among the many involved it may be clear that NPM in its different manifestations is not a clear cut topic, it is neither embraced nor implemented in a straight way. The different topics - like institutional identity, performance agreements - belong to the discourse of NPM and thus have to be planned and prescribed. At the same time they are adapted, altered, re-interpreted and kept away. The discussions in the last narrative even explored the boundaries of what we are doing. Should not we take more time to reflect upon what we are doing? Should we not interrupt our daily business to reflect about why and how we are doing the things we do?

In these discussions discomfort with NPM shines through. It is not that the members of the board and the managers are the unmoved and uncritical apostles of NPM. We are struggling to seek ways to take care of the interests of many stakeholders. I think the narratives indicate that taking part and taking a position in the debate about NPM is quite difficult and that talking about this difficulty as such is even more difficult, although it is emphasized that talking about the last topic would be meaningful.

Equally important is to notice that the narratives exemplify that management is not a monolithic entity in an organization, but a group of people who have different and contradictory interests. The often depreciatory framing of managers (Alvesson and Willmott, 2012; Metze, 2011; Verkroost, 2012; Wild, 2013; Wit, 2013) can be put in perspective. In daily reality among managers there are ongoing negotiations and interpretations, contagiously seeking ways out of trouble and taking care of many interests. And every time it is unpredictable what these discussions may bring. Maybe the discussions about dissent even provoke a "... hesitatingly space for little stories, the cautious unmasking, the light irony with which things and people are described, which in due course form counterpoints which turn over the system, and are the raw material for a different story in which people prosper in a better way." (Brinkgreve, 2014: 146).

Change and reform of educational practices happen all day long, emerging in local conversations. In these conversations people construe and re-construe their reality

together. Educational work is relational (Wit, 2013). It would be unwise and it even proofed to be an illusion - amongst others by the incessant dissatisfaction - that there is some way of programming social reality by means of plans, procedures, programmes or whatever tools and techniques are used. Plans, programmes and whatever tools and techniques which are used, are part of our conversations, however being part of a conversation is really something else as programming the conversations or an output.

It is tempting for me as an adviser to draw rather far reaching conclusions about the impact of performativity, the struggles with the consequences of performativity and the need of provisions to tackle these. To prevent drawing easily far reaching conclusions it is wise to take performativity, corporate jestership and time for interruption together to shed some light on what advisory work could be in 2014.

7.4 Advisory work in times of rumbling on performativity

Weren't we all there? Aren't we all there? By pointing towards the conversational character of our social reality I am also indicating that everybody is involved, has some sort of responsibility and is in some sort of way powerful. If not, everyday educational reality would look much like the blueprints as designed on the desks of educational science, civil servants and politicians and obediently be implemented and managed by members of the board and all sorts of managers. Not to speak of the docile way members of staff would carry out their duties. What a brave new world that would be!

However, as can be seen, in everyday reality we are struggling - muddling through (Lindblom, 1959) - with what is demanded by the cult value of performativity. The cult value is an idealized norm to which particular situations relate (Mead, 1934). Performativity is a cult value originated by management consultants already some time ago (McKenna, 2006) and we struggle with it in relation with what we already are, with what we find important and with we have learned to find decent.

It is in this context that I again reflect upon my role as adviser. A reflection which will qualify again what I did and a reflection on what I or some other members of staff might do.

Advisory work: the 2nd demise of a jestership

In reflecting upon the narratives about identity management (chapter 4) and the drawing up of the performance agreements (chapter 5) the idea of a corporate jester emerged as a possible indication for the way I do my advisory work. Already in the narrative about the performance agreements the ironic or mocking interpretation of jestership was complemented with ideas about mediating, connecting and stabilizing efforts. This broader perspective on jestership emerged on the basis of an analysis and reflections upon my actions as described. In the narrative about dissent (chapter 6) I was highly involved by breaking open some new perspectives on how to deal with dissent.

Apparently an ironic or mocking stance is part of a greater palette of skills. Merely irony would have had unproductive consequences regarding the assignments I had and unproductive consequences regarding what happened in the discussions with regard to dissent. Merely irony is not taking anything seriously and runs the risk of not being taken serious. Being a trickster irony is effective by reconfiguring instead of obliterating social reality (Frentz, 2008).

If I look back on my career and some of my own descriptions I see a lot of different things I did. I see myself doing odd jobs, and fiddling around with many subjects, positions and activities. Strictly speaking there is no clear line in my career, coincidence, curiosity, needed variation and challenges, and a more or less strong inclination towards autonomy play their part. I was often assigned as and felt myself some sort of a handyman. At the same time I am very connected to the UAS, quite loyal, and able and enabled to do very different things.

My conclusion is that as far as it concerns my advisory work neither I am a jester nor working as a jester within my organization. If anything, then I would prefer to be labelled as a bricoleur, a handyman-like or tinkering figure which I came across in the literature of OMS. Indeed a bricoleur with a touch of irony, and of course a bricoleur within the context of the UAS.

Advisory work: bricolage with an ironic touch

It was the French anthropologist and ethnologist Lévi-Strauss (1908-2009) who introduced the concept of bricolage. Bricolage is used to describe the activity of someone who uses what is at hand to accomplish a task. Lévi-Strauss used the concept as a contrast between the science of the concrete and the analytic or rational way of action within Western cultures. It was Weick (2001) who in 1982 introduced bricolage in OMS. In research bricolage is introduced as an emergent way of doing research with montages as result (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). Within OMS bricolage has a more or less elaborated profile through which the result of the work of the bricoleur can be interpreted as emerging from his practical efforts (Duymedjian and Ruling, 2010; Fuglsang and Sørensen, 2011; Gabriel, 2002).

If I look again at the narratives I could say that there is a lot more of bricolage than assumed from the perspective of rational planning or performativity. I would even conjecture that bricolage is far more the rule if we change - or innovate (Fuglsang and Sørensen, 2011) - our reality by adjusting at the spot. Therefore it is interesting to know why managers - or politicians or civil servants - might be keeping up the suggestion that an educational organizational reality can be planned in a rational way, even when it is known that in most circumstances that is not the case (Hooge, 2013).

However, looking at the three narratives I did more than adjusting. I was busy enabling processes by connecting and mediating among people, and redefining and putting in perspective subjects, and apparently not avoiding to discuss touchy subjects.

Apparently bricoleurs are able to improvise, to combine different perspectives, have an eye for significant details, avoid redundancy, tinker to find the useful, are able to work on different targets and aim at good enough results (Gabriel, 2002). Therefore is needed that a bricoleur has intimate knowledge or is familiar with the environment he works in, has a network of relations, is able and versatile to work with unclear outcomes, and assembles in unplanned ways his ideas and information (Duymedjian and Ruling, 2010). Based on my research I would add that a bricoleur needs good - but not too strong - relationships with a lot of people. He does not need only to know where to find them, but also needs to find those who are willing to do some work with and for him.

Although I recognize my way of acting in this list of skills, I miss the implicated sceptical or ironic stance towards the importance of being serious. In my experience you cannot tinker without toning down a lot of things which seem to be very important. In a general sense in my case this scepticism can be recognized in toning down the importance of an identity-management programme, and in trying to stay close to what we did around the drawing up the performance agreements and not to overestimate our capacity of planned reform. To enable discussions about dissent, hierarchy was put in perspective. I even suppose that without an ironic attitude the whole idea of needed interruption of rumbling on performativity would have not occurred to me.

In retrospect I conclude that as an adviser I was working as a bricoleur, however a bricoleur with quite an ironical attitude towards control, planning and likelihood of managing. Someone who rumbles on what seems to be evident. Without my belief in the vanity of all sort of things I think I could not have enabled - in joint efforts with the others involved - what now evolved as the outcome of discussions.

In demand: a neologism

A neologism is needed to unite the bricoleur with the corporate jester. A neologism in which the tinkering and the irony are united to enable to interrupt business as usual, to invite for reflection and for redefining social reality in its consequences.

Maybe this neologism will enable to appoint me to whatever it will bring, contrary to the idea of appointing me as a corporate jester. However, I emphasize that this 'bricoleur with an ironic touch' became apparent through my research in the UAS, not as something that should be organized, but as something which is there and done. Paradoxically a formal appointment seems to be redundant, unless other motives emerge.

Time for interruption

A more interesting question is if the UAS is and keeps on being in need of this kind of advisory work. I would say yes, given the emerged wish to prolong the discussions about how to gain varying insights in what we are doing. I conclude that there is a readiness - a courage - among most of the people involved in the discussions about

dissent to develop opportunities to reflect upon and to disengage from what I have designated as the rumbling on performativity. There is willingness to interrupt. To continue, more and different bricoleurs with an ironic touch could be needed. Starting to reflect with more and different members of staff would make them visible. Although I doubt whether our Minister and State Secretary of Education will like that as the way constructive dissenting voices is organized as it may harm the fulfilment of the performance agreements.

7.5 Movement of thought: intermezzo regarding two of the questions asked

In reflecting upon my contribution to the interactions the subject of corporate jestership emerged as a potential indication for the way I do my work. In due course the idea of a corporate jestership was abandoned, paradoxically as a result of the research-process which brought the subject of corporate jestership to mind. If ever asked if my research provoked movement of thought, I assume that the road taken from a corporate jestership towards being a bricoleur with a touch of irony, illustrates perfectly some movements of my thought.

At the same time it is remarkable that my research and my participating in several discussions enabled different discussions and changed the way others involved reflect upon the UAS. Writing, reflecting and discussing of my research enabled discussions about an elusive subject such as dissent. Not only my thoughts moved, but in due course somehow the thoughts of the others involved moved too. My research enabled to discuss and to reflect about dissent and interruption, enabled 'many minds' to be bothered by these topics.

If beforehand I would have had in mind to provoke discussions about dissent or interruption, I would have to admit that I had planned to undertake some classical action research, aiming at solving a problem.

However, I did not plan to solve the problem of an apparent lack of dissent or a lack of interruptive reflections. These topics emerged, although I realize that what actually emerged also depended on my taken for granted assumptions. Without my being present, discussions might have taken another course.

I conclude that my research underpins one of the notions of a complexity approach when it is stated that interactions on a micro-level evolve into unintended social patterns. Neither I nor the others involved predicted that somewhere in 2013 we would be discussing the topics of dissent and interruption. But now, it is on the agenda. Moreover, my research underpins the concept of transformative causality as it clarifies that history - to be found in for instance my taken for granted assumptions, in the history of the UAS, and in the history of governmental educational policy - is

present in what happens, but at the same time is transformed within the local discussions. If one wants to speak about change or innovation of education, it is there in the local interactions of many people.

Question 1: Am I able to make plausible the emergence of the main topics?

It may be clear how against the background of my taken for granted assumptions 'performativity', 'time for interruption' and 'bricoleur' emerged as a consequence of the analytical and reflexive work on the narratives. I could say that the three subjects emerged as a subtext in and due to the interactions of the many people involved, but only became visible due to the reflexive efforts.

Question 2: Which in-depth reflections are enabled regarding advisory work?

With regard to my advisory work in the UAS I conclude that the in-depth reflections have brought an awareness about the needed presence of a bricoleur with a touch of irony. Departing from being an adviser to the board and speculating about a corporate jestership, my research clarified that in times where many different, sometimes contradictory and sometimes firm demands are made, an ironic bricoleur appears to be of help.

Recapitulating, still three questions remain to be answered. It remains a question whether my research will resonate with the readers, whether I fulfilled my ethical responsibilities as a researcher and what the contributions of my research to the field of OMS may be. Resonance and ethical matters will be the subjects of the next paragraph, the contributions to the field of OMS will be discussed thereafter.

7.6 About the rigorousness of my research

"We are in a new age where messy, uncertain, multivoiced texts, cultural criticism, and new experimental works will become more common, as will more reflexive forms of fieldwork, analysis, and intertextual interpretation." (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 26). A complex responsive process-approach is one of the new ways of experimental fieldwork. It is not experimental as a methodological design, but experimental compared with mainstream ways of doing research. It is fieldwork because a complex responsive process-approach departs from experiences from the researcher himself and its research is close to what evolves in daily life.

Whatever the position within the many experimental new ways of doing research, researchers working from a complex responsive process-perspective are held to take responsibility for the quality of their research. At the end of chapter 2 I formulated five criteria for the quality of research from a complex responsive process perspective. Taking up the thread of these criteria I will reflect shortly upon my research.

Analysis, reflexivity, researcher's bias, movement of thought

The research is structured by working in a learning group and by making use of narratives which are evaluated in terms of authenticity and relevance, and analytical and reflexive potential. My narratives give evidence of these evaluations. However, for now to me it seems that the portrayal of my taken for granted assumptions is slightly overdone. In their detail it appeared almost impossible to relate them very specifically to how I acted as described in the narratives. There is still something to work out regarding radically reflexive research. Taken as a portrayal of my original interests in doing research in my organization, a comparison of the narrative about my taken for granted assumptions with the final conclusions of the research exemplify and underpin my movement of thought, alongside some kind of my tenacity which of course influences - but not dictates! - the course of events. From the wisdom of the crowd to a corporate jester to a bricoleur with an ironic touch in times of performativity is quite a winding road. Moreover, I believe I came to understand what a complex responsive process-approach implies.

Being a full member of the community

A discussion about me being a member of the different and temporary communities within the larger community of the UAS is obsolete. My research is done as an observer and participant of which the other members of the community were aware. Every time I communicated in advance about the fact that my work would be the subject of research I was undertaking.

Good narratives

For me it is hard to evaluate if my narratives offer a clear, challenging, careful and enriching perspective on the situations, social interactions and/or activities as experienced by me. As far as I am concerned the narratives suffice these criteria, but at this point I leave an evaluation to the reader. The different members of staff who are involved in and read the narratives at least affirmed that the narratives were real and imaginable from my point of view.

The research should be transferable

Transferability should imply the analysis, reflections and conclusion of the researcher must resonate, be recognised and understandable by people who are working in more or less the same circumstances. As far as people of the UAS have read the work I see that it resonates and for instance someone starts to tell that he is a bit embarrassed how things are going (chapter 5) or tells that the discussions changed his way of acting (chapter 6). As far as external people are involved it is hard to evaluate at this moment. A slight indication may be given.

During the discussions about dissent I had conversations with three different people outside the UAS. I approached them, having heard that they were perceived as more or less as a jester. A first conversation I had with a colleague of another UAS who is formally appointed as Head Corporate Control. Part of his work is to prevent fraud

regarding examinations, certificates, expenses claims or working conditions. He also investigates whether and how intended policy is realized. Apart from these tasks he is sometimes approached for advice or asked to mediate. To be able to do his job his independence with regard to the board is vouched for by a covenant. By that he has admission to all meetings and documents, and is free in giving advice. I had a second discussion with someone who I characterize as an external coach for senior managers, with amongst others the assignment of a jester (Baaren et al., 2007; Raad, 2008). For already 25 years he counselled senior managers by discussing confidentially with them their dilemma's, suggesting some advice and by confronting them with other perspectives or their blind spots. A third conversation I had with a colleague from another UAS about the way he fulfilled his job. I had heard that he had presented himself as a kind of sweeper or libero in his UAS. The conversation with him became reflexive because he felt invited to reflect upon the way he acted and succeeded in doing things. Half-way our conversation I expressed that I thought he was a bricoleur (Duymedjian and Ruling, 2010), meant as someone who on the basis of his experience and expertise is able to listen to and to connect other people and to produce effective results on often touchy dossiers. To his own surprise he could identify with what I expressed.

These persons have different assignments than mine, work for a part in different circumstances. But based on my conversations with them I assume that my experiences and my acting resonate with them and will have some relevance in reflecting upon their own jobs.

If I only read the news in the last few months I see a shooting up discussion about the controversial character of the effects of performativity whether in healthcare or education. Topics like 'Dutch Monster' (Oostrom, 2015), 'Quick-fit'- healthcare (Effting, 2015), 'tick-off-list'-treatment (Stoffelen, 2015) and 'Carried too far rationalization' (Sommer, 2015) passed in review. If only to understand how difficult meaningful discussions about these topics are, my research has something to add to these discussions.

Ethical matters

I recapitulate briefly what I stated in chapter 2, where I clarified how I had taken responsibility for ethical issues regarding my research. I like to emphasize again that the only person to hold responsible for the analyses and reflections am I. The narratives as such were read by the specific people involved, but not with the intention that they had to agree on everything. I asked for correction of distortions in perception and mistakes. I left out any remark regarding personal matters or personal relations in the narratives. In the narratives the specific people have a pseudonym, based on the initials of their function. My conclusion is that in terms of informed and process consent I was careful regarding the interests of the specific people involved. None of the involved objected to this research or objected to be published about, neither had some second thoughts about being involved in it. Being embedded in a learning group and writing about present-day situations prevention of scientific fraud is provided for. In a

general sense my research was authorized by the President of the Board, who I kept informed.

Still there is the ethics of consequence. What will happen when outsiders read about the micro-politics in the UAS? The persons involved in my research may be confronted with reactions they could not have foreseen when consenting with the research. Based on my experiences in former presentations the readers will like and be interested in what they read. I really do hope they do not like it because they get a kick out of the 'irrationality' in what happened, but because they like the care people show in taking their job seriously.

By that having answered my questions 3 and 4 I suggest that if my research should have some consequences for educational or institutional policy, in general I would suggest to develop less policy and to have many more conversations about what is done, what to do and how to do. However, the more specific contribution of my research to the field of (educational) OMS (question 5) will be subject of the next paragraph.

7.7 Contributions to the field of (educational) OMS

To reflect upon the contributions of my research to the field of OMS I make a difference between two outlooks how to build on my research.

One outlook departs from the assumption that a complex responsive process-perspective on research is one of the many possibilities of doing research, as if a researcher should be prepared (and able) to choose the method which fits to the problems raised. This approach fits in with Verschuren's (2009) methodological relativism. It is an approach which can be found in the way Homan (2014) locates a complex responsive process-approach next to other communities, as if these communities can build on this research. From this approach it is relatively obvious to reflect upon further research and implications.

My second outlook on the contributions of my research conjectures that a complex responsive process-approach offers a different perspective on what is happening and on what might be possible to change. From that conjecture I use the findings of my research to take a position in the broader discussions about education. To illustrate the potential of the research from a complex responsive process-approach I will briefly explore the radical educational reforms as proposed by the association "Beter Onderwijs Nederland" (Better Education Netherlands - founded in 2006).

Further research and implications when my research is located next to other communities

Homan (2014) makes a difference in the academic status of the research based on a complex responsive process-approach for the different communities which might be

interested in the research. In these different communities different sets for the quality of research are used, accordingly the use of findings from a complex responsive process-perspective will be assessed from different viewpoints. Briefly I explore some possibilities.

A positivistic community

For the mainstream, on positivism oriented scientific community my findings could be used in an explorative fashion as data from a radically reflexive perspective which can generate new hypotheses and new themes for further research.

It could be interesting to take up further research into the presence and impact of corporate jesters or bricoleurs within organizations with regard to the development and attainability of policy. Apparently in practice a bricoleur with a touch of irony is needed to bridge the many differences. The characteristics of this 'mechanic for montage' (in line with Denzin and Lincoln, 1994) is to be explored along the call for a corporate jester (Firth and Leigh, 1998; Kets de Vries, 1993; Raad, 2008; Riveness, 2006), the need for a mediating link (Christakis and Fowler, 2010; Csermely, 2009) and of a bricoleur (Duymedjian and Ruling, 2010; Fuglsang and Sørensen, 2011; Gabriel, 2002; Weick, 2001). It may even be that what in hindsight at the beginning of my PhD-research I characterized as my fuzzy mixture of different perspectives on life, work or management, is a precondition for being a bricoleur with a touch of irony.

The community of advisers and managers

The community of readers – in my case members of my organization and advisers in other organizations or managers – would be interested in the practical value of this research. Positioning my research as practice-based of an n-type (Verschuren, 2009; see 2.3), I assume that my research could help to be more susceptible to dissenting opinions in order to prevent derailments, which might be evolving or lying in ambush. Is this perspective the pragmatic value of my research might also be worthwhile for other organizations. When neither policy-development nor policy-implementation appears to a linear and rational process and inevitably involves the participation – whether constructive, indifferent or destructive from whatever point of view – of many, then exclusion or suppression of opinions could be hazardous. The research underlines that managers suffer from tensions and ambiguity in coping with the introduction of NPM-oriented policy (Christopher and Leung, 2015; Vakkuri, 2010), and supposedly will be still doing that for a long time (Lapsley, 2008). In reality there may be (created) far more opportunities to discuss the whereabouts of policy.

Critical self-reflection for professionals

For a performative quality of the research – performative in a pedagogical interpretation – it is interesting to ask whether the research triggers critical reflection about the reader's life and work situation. Is the research sensitizing the reader to its own political behaviour? If my findings resonate they could have impact on colleagues who read my thesis and start reflecting about their interactions within the UAS. As mentioned

in the chapter 6 this already happened during the discussions about dissent. Reflection enabled exploring what happened and to reflect upon the taken for granted logic of the existing situation. For readers outside the UAS, my research may elicit some critical self-reflection about their work as advisers. When their work is comparable with my work: what are the implications for the work of advisers when one understands that they operate in an educational reality which is confronted with ongoing criticism and many reform-proposals?

Reflecting from my research on my original ideas about policy-development (chapter 3) my acting as an adviser has changed. I entered my PhD-research with the idea of developing some participative co-creative strategy for policy-development, based on recent neuro-scientific insights (Damasio, 1999, 2003; Koch, 2004; Lamme, 2010) and inspired by the notion of the wisdom of the crowd (Surowiecki, 2004). My research has taught me to see the paradoxical character of organizing an organizational polyphony while it is already and inevitably there. Nowadays I start working and exploring the topics at hand together with the people involved, try to discover what works and what not, make sense of what happens and I am prepared to discover unexpected solutions. As a 'member of a self-organizing process' I am not restraint sharing my opinion, however restraint in setting an agenda which already anticipates on the solutions. Although uncanny and more exacting than before, nowadays I manage far more in uncertainty, however somehow confident that something valuable will come out of it. As far as my contributions in my working environment appeared to be connected with the work of a corporate jester - putting into perspective the dominant managerial discourse - I am aware that my efforts put a pressure on how our organizational reality is conceptualised. To put this a bit boldly: sometimes I bring about that people get hot under their collar. Moreover, I feel much more liberty to do so as a result of the discussions and interactions my research brought about.

From a critical self-reflection on the quality of my kind of research of course quite some ethical issues could be researched into. What is the impact if you find yourself or your colleagues described in a research-report? Does the research harm yourself, your colleagues or your institution or does the research enable some opening up of discussions? Somehow these ethical dimensions of the research undertaken commute between an opportunity to engage in triple-loop reflection by which supposedly principles can be discussed and altered (Starr and Torbert, 2005; Torbert, 2004) and the political hurly burly of organizational life in which it may be not wise to expose yourself (Stacey, 2007). This still apart from the question whether it even might be possible to change deliberately and easily your principles.

The silent community

As a final community Homan (2014) mentions the community of silent voices. From a postmodern or emancipatory perspective my research may give helpful insight in the way policy is developed - or better: evolves - in the interactions of - mostly - powerful senior managers. Although paradoxical, my findings may help to hear diversity in the

many voices instead of converting diversity into one mission, one vision and one set of performance indicators. Instead of waiting until an eruption about the rattled on emphasis on cost-effectiveness of education will dominate the newspaper headlines - as momentarily is the case in the Netherlands - hearing what is barely heard might be provoking other insights about the needed policy. To listen to a single voice may lead to unexpected outcomes. In this way the research is connected to research about resilience and the management of the unexpected (Weick and Sutcliffe, 2007), although it is clear that to encourage the wished for openness is quite a mission impossible (see chapter 6). It may even be that the work of an organizational jester or a bricoleur with a touch of irony enables to hear the sound of silence.

The research could be interesting to develop another perspective - from for instance a CMS-perspective (see chapter 6) - the way resistance or resilience is practiced in organizations. In what I found it is obvious that managerial practices are not monolithic, are internally and externally fragmented and do not incorporate a shared gladness about what apparently has to be done. My research might put in perspective research in which is suggested that NPM is a kind of unilateral panoptical process from which it is hard to escape only by being not authentic (Perryman, 2006) or fabricating a deceptive reality (Turner-Bisset, 2007).

The different communities as elaborated upon by Homan (2014) made it possible to connect my research with different perspectives on how to build on the findings. Next I will enter into a discussion about wished for educational reform in the Netherlands. It will not be my intention to discuss exhaustively the different positions in the discussions about education or to suggest some prescriptions to solve problems. I intend to illustrate how insights based on my research from a complex responsive process-perspective may have relevance in broader societal discussions.

A Dutch educational discussion and a complex responsive process-approach

As mentioned before there are hefty discussions about the lack of quality of education, among others explained by the consequences of performativity or NPM (Ankersmit and Klinkers, 2008; Brink et al., 2005; Dekker, 2013; Kneyber and Evers, 2013; Vergeer, 2012). A lot of criticism is to epitomize in the idea of 'probophilia' (Kenny and Davies, 2010), defined as a widespread disease of wanting to have substantiated evidence for everything. Something I associate with the insatiable hunger of the tapeworm.

A new Delta-plan

To give an idea of the wished for reform I use the proposals of the association "Beter Onderwijs Nederland. These proposals express and unite a lot of different ideas regarding educational reform. The association (Verbrugge, 2012) proposes that

- 1 the autonomy of the educational institutions should be ended and control should be returned to the government;
- 2 funding should be aimed at the educational process and the quality of the professionals;

- 3 councils for teachers / lecturers should be founded with right of say about educational matters
- 4 the government needs to control quality of the education, the internal organization and the quality of the staff;
- 5 craftsmanship and professional expertise must become leading in the way education is organized in sectors;
- 6 vocational/professional education is in need of radical changes in relation with the demands of the labour market;
- 7 the local or regional business community should become involved in education;
- 8 education should be able to realize education specified to age and talents of infants, schoolboys and schoolgirls;
- 9 to do an appeal on already retired experienced teachers to invite them to reconsider their early retirement because quality is needed.

It is obvious that - with a slight adaptation on the first criterion - the Delta plan fulfils the criteria of performativity (Scott, 1998). The first criterion is that reality is administered in a simplified way in numbers. In the case of the plan I would say: reduced to simplified processes of control and change. The second is the conviction that rational design will prompt improvement. If one thing then the plan is a rational one and full of ideas about improvement. The third one is an authoritarian relation between the rulers and the ruled. It may be clear that in the plan government will be back in the educational saddle, with more power to control than ever before. The fourth is that there is a lack of possibilities to resist the plans. If regulated by national law, who is to resist?

In my view a paradox of the Delta plan is that it tries to repair by means of what the imputed damage has caused. It is not a way of breaking away of imposed criteria within the practices of NPM or performativity, it is just the introduction of another - maybe even more comprehensive - set of criteria. The plan can be seen an expression of a modernistic belief in the changeability of social reality, an expression of a managerial change temper which is criticized (Trappenburg, 2008). The plan reinforces the myth of the manageability of educational institutions (Hooge, 2013). Cruel disappointment may lay ahead again, given the poor results of reforms of the public sector if based on NPM (Lapsley, 2009). The lasting dissatisfaction with education should be seen as an omen for the recurring disappointments, because - as my research indicates - a social reality is construed on the spot by those involved and not on a blueprint by those far away.

Again about 'them'

From a complex responsive process-perspective my first question regarding the Delta plan would be why the association first wants to formalize a council for teachers / lecturers before discussing educational matters with and among them? Why to invest in a huge amount of policy before starting to discuss with and among professionals? Why do present day professionals have to wait for the realization of the plan before

discussing with and among them what is happening and should be done? A second paradox of the plan is that the plan builds on the quality of the educational professionals and at the same time reduces their present-day involvement and professionalism in a quite depreciatory way. The paradox is strikingly voiced by Prick, one of the most influential Dutch critics on educational policy: "in the Netherlands it would be a good thing if the teacher would get more trust and space. But that is only possible if he or she is well educated." (in Kneyber, 2013: 39).

The plan also depreciates present-day members of boards and managers in a strong way, which by the way is quite common in the discussion about what is wrong in education (Metze, 2011; Verkroost, 2012; Wild, 2013; Wit, 2013). Apparently members of the boards and managers must be seen as the uncritical accomplices of management consultants, who according to McKenna (2006) from the 1950s penetrated the non-profit sector with their tools and techniques. Are management consultants - or all the MBA-trained managers (Metze, 2011) - then the specific group of people or organizations who planned (or at least caused) the apparent lack of quality of education? Or everything else that apparently is wrong in education?

My research from a complex responsive process-perspective and the Delta plan

The narratives, analyses and reflections about identity-management and the drawing of the performance agreements illustrate that plans neither are produced nor implemented in a linear and rational way. And somehow these narratives, or better: the interactions as described in the narratives reveal that there is an ongoing, partly hidden debate about how performativity invades organizational life. Recapitulating therefore, from my research I conclude that a Delta plan or such a thing as performance agreements keep on being confronted with a double barrier. First of all it may be obvious that performativity as such is debated in daily practice. Second it may be obvious that daily practice is not to be organized according to a blueprint. From the perspective of a complex responsive process-approach, reform cannot successfully be organized or imposed, but it will be an evolving connection by taking close interest in what people are doing, by being far more iterative and self-reflective about what management is doing itself, by engaging in the politics of everyday life in organizations and by being aware of the richness and potential of experience (Groot, 2010b; Mowles, 2011). Once again it is far more appropriate to start working and exploring with the people, to figure out what works and what not, to make sense of what happens and to be prepared to discover unexpected solutions.

To conclude: although research from a complex responsive process-perspective is neither research based on a representative sample taken from a large population, nor research based on in-depth interviews with experts in the field, the research still offers a meaningful contribution to general discussions about education.

7.8 Concluding remarks: a reconstructive methodology

As mentioned before I can speak of a social realistic point of departure (Lewis and Smith, 1980). A definition of reality becomes true in its consequences because "the meaning of what we are saying is the tendency to respond to it" (Mead, 1934: 67). Something real emerges all the time. A realness which is real in the emerging social objects or cult values, however exists and changes due to different perspectives. One can speak of an ongoing reconstruction of the past in the present. For researching the living present a reconstructive research methodology as practised within a complex responsive process-approach seems to be appropriate (Wagner, 1999). The foregoing research is to be read as a reconstruction of what happened in a UAS in connection with a reconstruction of the taken for granted assumptions of me as the researcher and adviser who works there. From that the reconstructive approach even obtained a radically reflexive character.

A complex responsive process-approach helps to understand the present by placing itself within a social realistic and dynamic perspective on reality and by offering opportunities to reflect and reconstruct the present and the past. In doing so this approach can be placed somewhere in the middle between post-modernistic relativism and modernistic objectivism.

Further methodological reflection seems appropriate because a complex responsive process-approach works from quite a specific perspective on management studies, shortly: on evolving patterns through local interactions and the other way around. Given the fundamental critique on objectifying OMS at first sight it is striking that Stacey states that "it is necessary to take up any insights psychology, sociology and philosophy have to offer us on the nature of local interaction between human agents." (Stacey, 2012b: 22). As far as traditional management sciences are a mixture of psychology, sociology, economy and to a lesser part political science (Devinney and Siegel, 2012; Ireland, 2012) it appears contradictory to criticize the methodological and philosophical basic assumptions of these sciences and at the same time to use their insights. However, at the same time it is appropriate to take into account many insights. Partly because these other insights enable to clarify one's own position, partly because from a complex responsive process-perspective it is unthinkable not to not engage with what is instead of to engage with what should be.

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The translation into English language of the quotes in the text and of the titles in the list of references are mine.

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De titel 'Rumbling on performativity' leidt tot enige vertaalmoeilijkheden, maar zet ons wel op het spoor van waar dit proefschrift over gaat. 'Rumbling on' heeft verschillende betekenissen. Het betekent dat iets voort dendert, onophoudelijk verder gaat en blijkbaar niet te stoppen is. 'Rumbling on' betekent ook dat er gerommeld wordt, dat er gesleuteld en geknutseld wordt aan en geworsteld met de dingen die voorbij komen. In dit proefschrift is 'performativity' iets wat voort dendert en voorbij komt, wat blijkbaar niet te stoppen is, en waarmee tegelijkertijd wordt gerommeld. Vrij vertaald wijst 'performativity' op een manier van beleidsvoering waarin efficiency voorop staat, en waar inhoud van beleid er nauwelijks toe doet. 'Performativity' is ook bekend onder de vlag van New Public Management, een managementfilosofie die efficiency binnen organisaties voorstaat en deze bevordert met behulp van budgettaire en prestatiegericht sturing.

Een onderzoek naar beleidsvorming vanuit de positie als observerende participant

Ik heb onderzoek gedaan naar de manier waarop beleid tot stand komt binnen mijn hogeschool. Tijdens het onderzoek werkte ik daar voornamelijk als adviseur van het College van Bestuur. Ik was nieuwsgierig naar wat er aan beleid tot stand komt en hoe dat gebeurt. Deze nieuwsgierigheid werd gevoed omdat ik vanuit allerlei functies waarin ik heb gewerkt binnen de hogeschool de paradoxale ervaring heb dat 'we' het nooit goed doen, dat 'we' het echter wel goed doen in de landelijke klasseringen met betrekking tot het HBO en dat 'we' in de praktijk vaak wat anders blijken te realiseren vergeleken wat 'we' ons voornemen. Ik was nieuwsgierig naar wat er dan wel gebeurt, ofwel hoe en welke dingen komen in de praktijk van alledag tot stand?

De beleidsvorming die ik heb onderzocht had te maken met een project op het gebied van identiteits-management, met het tot stand brengen van prestatieafspraken met het Ministerie van OCW en met een beleidsvoorbereidende discussie met betrekking tot het organiseren van constructieve tegenspraak. Dit laatste is een begrip dat eveneens uit de koker van het Ministerie van OCW komt.

Bij deze beleidsvorming was ik zelf intensief betrokken als programma-, project- en discussieleider. Het onderzoek is daarom gedaan van de positie van de observerende participant. Dit soort onderzoek bezit een eigen methodologische achtergrond en uitwerking. In brede zin wordt dit soort onderzoek betiteld als sociaal-constructionistisch, reflexief, narratief, auto-etnografisch of insider-research. Mijn onderzoek is gedaan vanuit een complex responsieve proces benadering (Stacey, Griffin, Shaw), onderzoek dat als insider-research kan worden gekwalificeerd. Deze vorm van onderzoek is aan de Universiteit van Hertfordshire (UK) ontwikkeld. In 2010 is deze manier van research geïntroduceerd in de PhD-School of Management van de Open Universiteit te Heerlen.

Radicaal reflexief onderzoek: theoretische oriëntaties - criteria voor wetenschappelijkheid – ethische verantwoordelijkheid

De eigen methodologische achtergrond en manier van werken vraagt om andere dan de gebruikelijke criteria om van een wetenschappelijke benadering te spreken. Waar doorgaans validiteit en generaliseerbaarheid van het onderzoek worden gevraagd, zijn voor dit type onderzoek andere criteria van toepassing. In de hoofdstukken 1 en 2 wordt uitgebreid stilgestaan bij de eisen waaraan dit soort onderzoek dient te voldoen om een certificaat van wetenschappelijkheid te verwerven.

Om deze andere criteria te bevatten moet duidelijk worden gemaakt dat onderzoek vanuit een complex responsieve proces benadering een andere dan gebruikelijke opvatting heeft over de werkelijkheid (ontologie) en de manier waarop deze wordt begrepen (epistemologie). Kortweg komt het er in dit perspectief op neer dat de manier waarop de werkelijkheid waargenomen wordt gevolgen heeft voor wat de werkelijkheid is. De werkelijkheid wordt dus niet als een op zich-zelf-staand gegeven gezien. De manier van waarnemen komt tot stand in de vele interacties tussen mensen. In deze interacties komen sociale patronen tot stand die min of meer gedeelde betekenissen opleveren en dus daarmee werkelijk worden en zijn. Ontologie en epistemologie versmelten met elkaar. Dit noemt men wetenschapsfilosofisch gezien een sociaal realistische positie.

Gevoed vanuit deze pragmatisch-filosofische grondslag (Mead) en naar analogie van een complexiteitsbenadering van de werkelijkheid (Prigogine) wordt vanuit een complex responsieve proces benadering gesteld dat onze sociale werkelijkheid voortdurend verandert, onvoorspelbaar en onzeker is. Onze sociale werkelijkheid komt niet rationeel en planmatig tot stand, maar kristalliseert zich in de vele sociale interacties als het ware 'achter onze rug om' uit (Elias). De interacties worden benaderd als zijnde doordeesemd van micro-politieke handelingen van alle betrokkenen (Foucault); in de vele sociale interacties is voortdurend micro-macht in het geding.

Een drietal narratieve verslagen zijn de empirische basis van het onderzoek. Als observerend participant beschrijf ik wat er zich rond de eerdergenoemde onderwerpen voordoet in een bepaalde groep van mensen die betrokken zijn bij het onderwerp. In de narratieve verslagen wordt zichtbaar gemaakt op welke wijze beleidsvorming tot stand komt. Meer specifiek: er wordt beschreven wat er gebeurt in de interacties en tot welke resultaten die interacties leiden. Vervolgens worden de narratieve verslagen reflexief gemaakt door ze te analyseren aan de hand van bestaande literatuur, om mede op basis daarvan te laten zien wat er aan de hand van een complex responsieve benadering anders begrepen kan worden. In alle drie de narratieve verslagen wordt duidelijk dat resultaten niet op een rationeel planmatige manier tot stand komen, maar als het ware het onvoorziene resultaat zijn van emergente ontwikkelingen in de groep van betrokkenen. Er ontstaat iets dat causaal noch lineair herleid kan worden op het proces waarin het tot stand komt. Aan deze emergentie draag ik bovendien bij omdat ik niet vanuit een buitenstaanders- maar binnenstaanderspositie onderzoek doe.

Emergentie met betrekking tot de narratieve verslagen doet zich ook voor in de analyses en reflexieve werk. Naarmate het onderzoek vordert worden drie verschillende soorten thema's zichtbaar. Thema's die een rol spelen in de praktijk van alledag in mijn hogeschool met betrekking tot beleidsvorming, thema's die een rol spelen met betrekking tot de wijze waarop ik mijn adviseursrol uitoefen dan wel kan uitoefenen en thema's die verband houden met het hoger onderwijs. De reflectie op wat op een emergente wijze zich inhoudelijk aandient, draagt bij tot het anders leren te begrijpen van mijn dagelijkse praktijk. Als zodanig maakt verandering in denken onderdeel uit van de onderzoeksmethodologie.

Bovenstaande overwegingen samengevat maken dat ik het onderzoek kwalificeer als radicaal reflexief. Radicaal reflexief onderzoek heeft als inzet de vanzelfsprekendheden van de onderzoeker, de vanzelfsprekendheden in andere onderzoeksliteratuur en de sociaal dynamische dimensies binnen lokale situaties te verhelderen. Met een dergelijke verheldering wordt overigens niet ingezet op een radicale verandering van koers, maar wordt mogelijk zichtbaar gemaakt wat had kunnen zijn en in de feitelijk gang van zaken onmogelijk is gemaakt.

Het gegeven dat een lokale situatie door een participerende binnenstaander wordt onderzocht vraagt logischerwijze om andere criteria dan generaliseerbaarheid en validiteit. Met behulp van discussies en ervaringen binnen de traditie van auto-etnografisch onderzoek heb ik andere criteria opgesteld.

- 1 Het onderzoek moet getuigen van een analytische en reflexieve benadering van de narratieve verslagen, waarbij zowel de vooringenomenheid van de onderzoeker als de ontwikkeling in zijn of haar denken zichtbaar moet zijn.
- 2 De onderzoeker dient als observerend participant een volledig lid te zijn van de verschillende gemeenschappen die hij of zij onderzoekt. De positie van binnenstaander moet vaststaan.
- 3 De narratieve verslagen moeten een helder, prikkelend, uitdagend, zorgvuldig en verrijkend perspectief bieden op de situaties en sociale interacties waarover verslag wordt gedaan. Voor betrokkenen in de situaties moeten de verslagen plausibel klinken gezien vanuit het standpunt van de onderzoeker.
- 4 Het onderzoek moet transferabel zijn, dat wil zeggen dat de analyses, de reflecties en de bevindingen weerklank moeten vinden bij de lezer, dan wel bij personen die in min of meer vergelijkbare situaties werkzaam zijn.

Vanwege de binnenstaanderspositie van de onderzoeker weegt aandacht voor de ethische dimensies van dit onderzoek zwaar. Betrokkenen moeten instemming hebben verleend dat zij voorkomen in de narratieve verslagen, zij moeten gelegenheid hebben gehad om inzage te hebben in de verslagen om zo nodig correcties te kunnen voorstellen. Daarnaast moet persoonlijke privacy en discretie aangaande een aantal onderwerpen zijn gewaarborgd. Uiteraard ligt er daarnaast een ethische verantwoordelijkheid bij de lezer: deze zou de zorg en openheid van alle betrokkenen moeten waarderen en niet de feitelijke gang van zaken moeten veroordelen.

Met de onderscheiden theoretische oriëntaties, criteria voor wetenschappelijkheid en de onderkende ethische verantwoordelijkheid is de context geschetst voor de verschillende hoofdstukken waarin narratieve verslagen het vertrekpunt zijn.

De vanzelfsprekendheden van de onderzoeker

Het is logisch om bij de start van radicaal reflexief onderzoek twee onderwerpen aan de orde te stellen. Op de eerste plaats de vanzelfsprekendheden van de onderzoeker. Wie is dat met welke opvattingen en ervaringen, die het onderzoek doet? Op de tweede plaats de vraag wat wordt door hem of haar in zijn of haar lokale situatie als problematisch ervaren en waarom?

In hoofdstuk 3 geef ik een schets van mijn sociale wording, van mijn - wat filosofische - kijk op het bestaan, mijn loopbaan, de keuzes die ik op verschillende momenten daarin heb gemaakt en wat ik als problematisch ervaar in mijn werk op het moment dat ik start met mijn onderzoek. Immers, binnen een radicaal reflexieve benadering wordt dat wat er wordt verondersteld wat er aan de hand is (ontologie) als verbonden gezien met de manier waarop iemand het waarneemt of ervaart (epistemologie). En de manier waarop iemand waarneemt of ervaart komt niet uit de lucht vallen, maar bezit een sociaal verleden.

Globaal gezien schilder ik me zelf als iemand die in de loop van zijn leven een allergie heeft opgebouwd voor ongefundeerde autoriteit, in mijn loopbaan als manager altijd een wat ambivalente houding heeft behouden ten opzichte van de waardering en effectiviteit van een manager en die qua organisatiefilosofie wordt geïnspireerd door ideeën over co-creativiteit en *wisdom of the crowd*. Het engagement van medewerkers met hun organisatie is in mijn ogen daarom belangrijk voor het slagen van veranderingen in de organisatie. In de door mij eerder geleide veranderprojecten heb ik engagement altijd proberen te bewerkstelligen en is ook nu engagement een vanzelfsprekend uitgangspunt voor mijn verdere handelen. Vanuit mijn perspectief zie ik dat binnen mijn hogeschool een voortdurende weifeling aanwezig is tussen een top down- en bottom-up-benadering ten aanzien van beleidsvorming.

Het onderzoeken wat er in de actualiteit gebeurt en tot stand komt in beleidsvorming is het onderwerp van de volgende drie hoofdstukken waarvoor de narratieve verslagen het vertrekpunt vormen. In de verslagen, analyses daarvan en reflecties daarop wordt in elk geval zichtbaar hoe mijn vanzelfsprekendheden een rol spelen in wat er gebeurt. Dat alleen al is een element van onvoorspelbaarheid dat verheldert dat beleidsvorming geen rationele en planmatige gebeurtenis is.

Betekenis geven aan een *internal branding*-project

In het kader van vernieuwing van het marketingbeleid was een project gestart dat als uitgangspunt had dat het vermarkten van je organisatie alleen zin heeft als je intern waarmaakt wat je extern belooft. Het project had daarom als eerste doelstelling om de feitelijk binnen de hogeschool aanwezige gemeenschappelijke merkwaarden te

articuleren, om de medewerkers vervolgens bewust te maken van wat iedereen feitelijk bond (proces van *internal branding*). Deze bewustwording zou helpen om de identiteit van de hogeschool te versterken om onder meer daarmee de marktpositie te behouden of te versterken.

Het narratieve verslag (in hoofdstuk 4) verhaalt hoe binnen het coördinatieteam van het project in een proces van 10 weken aanbevelingen en conclusies voor het College van Bestuur werden opgesteld. Deze aanbevelingen en conclusies betroffen een evaluatief onderzoek naar de effectiviteit van het project, nadat dit project twee jaar had gelopen. In welke mate werden de merkwaarden herkend en gedeeld? En werden ze in de praktijk ook als sturend ervaren? Dat waren twee kernvragen binnen het toen gehouden evaluatieve onderzoek.

In het narratieve verslag over de 10 weken van het opstellen van aanbevelingen en conclusies is zichtbaar hoe in de voortdurende interacties tussen de leden van het coördinatieteam een aantal interpretaties werd geconstrueerd. De betekenissen die aan het evaluatieve onderzoek werden toegekend verschoven qua inhoud en implicatie naarmate de tijd voortschreed. Een opvallende verschuiving is bijvoorbeeld dat er niet meer over merkwaarden maar over kernwaarden werd gesproken, waardoor in beginsel de gewenste normatieve uitwerking van het project aanmerkelijk werd vergroot.

Hoewel de verschillende leden van het coördinatieteam er verschillend instonden en verschillende belangen hadden bij de betekenisverlening lag er na 10 weken een gedeelde set van aanbevelingen en conclusies. Bovendien was deze in redelijk grote harmonie tot stand gekomen. Omdat aanbevelingen en conclusies beleidsvormend zijn, was het interessant om te analyseren en te reflecteren wat er was gebeurd. Met een voor mij als onderzoeker en adviseur belangrijke kanttekening, namelijk dat er aanbevelingen en conclusies waren opgesteld waarin ik me eigenlijk niet helemaal kon vinden, maar wel mee akkoord was gegaan. Als ik bovendien al niet twijfels had over de zinvolheid en haalbaarheid van een dergelijk project. De aanbevelingen en conclusies hadden zich blijkbaar als het ware zelf georganiseerd.

Voor een verklaring waarom er dan toch na 10 weken gedeelde aanbevelingen en conclusies liggen ben ik te rade gegaan bij de psychologie. Begrippen als *social contagion* (sociale besmetting) en het vermijden van cognitieve dissonantie verhelderen hoe in de samenwerking tussen mensen gemeenschappelijkheid ontstaat zonder dat ze dat proces sturen of plannen. Bovendien is er sprake van wederzijdse afhankelijkheid die bevordert dat er compromissen worden gesloten, waarbij al rekening wordt gehouden met wat haalbaar wordt geacht voor een ieder en meer in het bijzonder de opdrachtgever. *Social contagion* en cognitieve dissonantie verhelderen wat in het werk van Mead en Elias is te vinden over responsiviteit en wederzijdse afhankelijkheid. In de aanbevelingen en conclusies hebben micro-politieke processen hun sporen nagelaten. Er werd voortdurend onderhandeld over wat 'als waarheid' zou worden gepresenteerd.

Ook de vraag naar de aard en inhoud van mijn werkzaamheden werd actueel. Immers, ik had mijn twijfels bij dit project, ik heb een sterke opvatting over hoe beleid het best tot stand kan komen en ik - ondanks 'mezelf' - in dit project participeerde en akkoord ging met een aantal zaken. In de reflectie op deze vragen kwam naar voren dat een ieder, dus ook ik ondanks mijn co-creatieve intenties, sociale interacties niet stuur noch overzie, of waarom ik word ingezet of kan worden ingezet op bepaalde taakstellingen. Het gedachtengoed van een complex responsieve proces benadering hielp om dit helder voor het voetlicht te krijgen. Als een verder te onderzoeken thema kwam de vraag naar voren of ik niet de hofnar binnen de organisatie ben, degene die tegen-draadsheid met voldoende flexibiliteit combineert en daarmee goed inzetbaar is op sommige projecten. Een volgend project bracht daarin verdere klaarheid.

Het opstellen van prestatieafspraken

Ik werd gevraagd om samen met een collega het opstellen van de prestatieafspraken te organiseren. Prestatieafspraken zijn de afspraken die in 2012 door elke hogeschool moesten worden afgesloten met de Staatssecretaris van OCW. Op straffe van een korting op het budget was elke hogeschool gehouden een aantal ambities te formuleren (en te realiseren) op het gebied van de kwaliteit van het onderwijs, van het personeel en van de profilering van de hogeschool binnen de eigen regio. Als zodanig zijn deze prestatieafspraken nogal dwingend met betrekking tot het te voeren hogeschoolbeleid

In het narratieve verslag (in hoofdstuk 5) over de maanden waarin de prestatieafspraken werden opgesteld binnen de hogeschool schilder ik het interne politieke – soms Babylonische – proces binnen het senior management, voor zover ik daarbij betrokken was. Bovendien wordt zichtbaar op welke manier de staande organisatie op het gebied van beschikbare informatie en beleid zich toen verhiel ten opzichte van wat er in de prestatieafspraken werd gevraagd. In de manier waar daarmee werd omgegaan werden onderlinge verhoudingen en de wijze van besluitvorming zichtbaar, waarbij het toeval soms een handje bleek te helpen. Voor wie wil is te zien welke plooien het uiteindelijke document voor de buitenwereld gladstrijkt.

Ten aanzien van de gebeurtenissen en mijn handelen stelde ik opnieuw de vraag aan de orde of in mijn adviseurswerkzaamheden trekken van een hofnar te herkennen waren. Daartoe plaatste ik mijn werkzaamheden onder meer in de bredere context van het beroep van consultant, zoals zich dat beroep vanaf het begin van de twintigste eeuw ontwikkelde. Bovendien werd aan de hand van de complex responsieve proces benadering verkend en gekritiseerd wat een adviseursrol inhoudt. Complexe responsiviteit werd zichtbaar door in kaart te brengen welke onvoorziene gebeurtenissen en hoe de werking van micro-macht binnen de wederzijds afhankelijke verhoudingen tijdens de periode van het opstellen van de prestatieafspraken, 'meehielpen' het uiteindelijke resultaat te bewerkstelligen. Het zicht op de inspanningen van een hofnar werd daardoor aangescherpt. In een dwaze en onvoorspelbare wereld - waarin Hoger Onderwijs aan een productieregime als dat van McDonalds wordt onderworpen

– bleek dat de aanwezigheid van een hofnar als niet-bedreigende bemiddelaar tussen een veelheid van standpunten nuttig was. De kennismaking met de in de literatuur ook onderscheiden rol van bricoleur riep nieuwe vragen op. Op deze rol wordt in hoofdstuk 7 teruggekomen.

Consensus over tegenspraak

De intensieve journalistieke en politieke aandacht voor gevallen van wanbestuur en mismanagement bij o.m. enkele onderwijsinstellingen zette het thema van een hofnar ook op de agenda van het College van Bestuur. Een benoeming van mij tot Corporate Critical Friend werd overwogen, als een van de mogelijkheden om potentiële wantoestanden te voorkomen. Om verschillende redenen werd hier van afgezien.

In het narratieve verslag (in hoofdstuk 6) wordt verhaald hoe zich een aantal discussies ontspon rondom het idee van constructieve tegenspraak. Het bevorderen van constructieve tegenspraak is een thema dat door het Ministerie van OCW op de agenda is gezet in het kader van de preventie van mismanagement binnen het Hoger Onderwijs. De discussies hierover speelden zich in en met het CvB af, al dan niet tesamen met een denktank die ik daartoe had georganiseerd. Het bleek gemakkelijker met elkaar te praten over de noodzaak van tegenspraak, dan daadwerkelijk met elkaar in tegenspraak te communiceren. Hiërarchie, macht en strategie bleven in elk gesprek aanwezig. In een verkenning van literatuur rondom macht bleek dat de benadering van macht binnen de traditie van Critical Management Studies nogal eenzijdig en lineair wordt benaderd, alsof het management de grote boosdoener is en telkens nieuwe middelen vindt om zijn zin door te drijven. Uit de analyse en reflectie vanuit een complex responsieve proces benadering kwam naar voren dat het management geen monolithische entiteit is en evenzeer worstelde met de managementstijl die het onderwijs met bijvoorbeeld prestatieafspraken wordt opgelegd. Dat worstelen gebeurt voortdurend en een belangrijke conclusie binnen deze discussies was dat er meer gelegenheid gevonden zou moeten worden om stil te zijn waar we 'eigenlijk' mee bezig zijn.

Finale

De analyses en reflecties op de narratieve verslagen droegen bij tot het anders leren te begrijpen van mijn dagelijkse praktijk. De ontwikkeling van het anders leren begrijpen - verandering in denken - is zoals aangegeven onderdeel van de onderzoeksmethodologie. De opgedane inzichten worden aan het einde (in hoofdstuk 7) samengebracht met als doel te beschrijven wat er eigenlijk aan de orde is in mijn werk. Daarnaast wordt er verantwoording afgelegd over het onderzoek en de gehanteerde methodologie.

In mijn onderzoek komt tevoorschijn dat er binnen de hogeschool op allerlei fronten wordt geworsteld met wat ik in het begin van deze samenvatting betitelde als 'performativity'. De eenzijdige nadruk op efficiency als sturend beginsel is omstreden en geen uitgemaakte zaak. Er blijkt bovendien dat het management geen monolithische

entiteit is, maar dat de diverse betrokkenen worstelen met betekenisverlening aan beleid. Er wordt een behoefte gearticuleerd om meer stil te kunnen staan bij wat zich aandient en afspeelt. De dagelijkse gang van zaken een keer kunnen doorbreken zou daarbij helpen.

Daarnaast is mijn conclusie dat mijn werkzaamheden minder de trekken hebben van een hofnarschap, maar meer verwant zijn aan wat beschreven wordt als de bricoleur. Een bricoleur is de klusjesman binnen de organisatie die op pragmatische wijze uiteenlopende onderwerpen en uitgangspunten kan verbinden. Met als belangrijke toevoeging dat in vergelijking met de bestaande literatuur daarover, een bricoleur over een behoorlijk dosis ironie moet beschikken. Deze ironie is nodig om het belang van de uiteenlopende standpunten te relativeren en de eenzijdige nadruk op efficiency vanuit het 'performativity'-denken.

Indien is gebleken dat 'performativity' een omstreden manier van beleidsvoering is omdat dit deels als een betekenisloos binnendringen wordt ervaren, dan kan ik op basis van mijn onderzoek ook de discussie aangaan met een landelijke discussie over onderwijsvernieuwing. Dat heb ik gedaan door de plannen van de bond "Beter Onderwijs Nederland" tegen het licht te houden en te concluderen dat deze slechts een voortzetting dan wel intensivering van een 'performativity'-cultus zijn, waarin het belang van de aanwezigheid van professionals in het debat op een paradoxale wijze wordt ontkend en onderschreven.

Rondom beleidsvorming is te constateren dat deze zich op een onvoorspelbare wijze ontwikkelt. Wanneer voorgenomen beleid realiteit moet worden dan is het zaak voor managers om te participeren in de dagelijkse, micro-politieke werkelijkheid in plaats van achter hun bureau blauwdrukken te verspreiden.



The double meaning of 'rumbling on' indicates what this thesis is about. It means that something ceaselessly carries on and apparently is unstoppable. 'Rumbling on' also means that things are fussed around or doctored with. 'Performativity' is the thing that rumbles on and is rumbled on. Generally speaking 'performativity' refers to a way of formulating and implementing policy in which efficiency is leading and substance hardly matters. Performativity is also known as New Public Management; a management-philosophy which champions and advances efficiency within organizations by means of budgetary and performance-oriented control.

Research into policymaking from the position of the observing participant

I did research into the way policy evolved in the University of Applied Sciences (UAS) I work for. At the time of the research I worked as an adviser to the Executive Board. I was curious about which and how policy evolved. My curiosity was nourished by my paradoxical experience - in different positions within the UAS - that apparently 'we' never do the right things, yet 'we' are highly ranked in national rankings and still 'we' often accomplish something else as intended. I became curious about what really happens, about how and which things evolve in daily practice.

The policymaking I did research into was about a project on identity-management, about the drawing up of performance agreements imposed by the Ministry of Education and about an explorative discussion about the organization of constructive dissent. Constructive dissent is a concept that also came up from the Ministry of Education.

In this policymaking I was intensively involved as programme, project and discussion leader. Therefore my research is done from the position of observing participant. This kind of research has its own methodological background and explanation. In a broad sense this kind of research can be labelled as social constructionist, reflexive, narrative, auto-ethnographic or insider research. My research is done from a complex responsive process-perspective (Stacey, Griffin, Shaw), research which can be qualified as insider research. This specific perspective has been developed at the University of Hertfordshire (UK). In 2010 this kind of research has been introduced in the PhD school of Management of the Open University in Heerlen (NL).

Radically reflexive research: theoretical orientations – criteria of scientificity – ethical responsibility

The specific methodological background demands other than the usual criteria to be able to speak of a scientific approach. Validity and generalizability are normally demanded, however for this kind of research different criteria are appropriate. In chapters 1 and 2 I elaborate extensively on the demands for this kind of research in order to gain a certificate of scientificity.

To comprehend these different criteria it must be clarified that research from a complex responsive process-perspective opts for a different idea about the status of reality (ontology) and the way this reality is understood (epistemology). Shortly, from this

perspective it comes down to the proposition that the way reality is perceived has consequences for what is reality is. Reality is not approached as something of its own. The way of perceiving reality evolves out of the many interactions among people. In these interactions social patterns evolve which produce more or less shared meanings and which thus become real. From the philosophy of science this perspective is termed as a social realistic point of view.

Nourished from a pragmatic-philosophical basis (Mead) and by analogy of a complexity approach (Prigogine) from a complex responsive process-perspective it is postulated that our social reality continuously changes, is unpredictable and uncertain. Our social reality does not evolve in a rational and planned way, but crystallizes so to speak 'behind our back' out of our many interactions (Elias). The interactions are approached as permeated by the micro-political actions of all involved (Foucault); in the many interactions micro-power is always at issue.

Three narratives are the empirical basis of my research. As an observing participant I describe what evolved in a specific group of people which is involved in the mentioned before subjects. In the narratives policymaking becomes apparent. More specific: I describe what happens in the interactions and to which results these interactions lead. Subsequently the narratives are made reflexive by analysing them by using existing literature on the subjects, amongst others for to demonstrate what from a complex responsive process-perspective can be understood differently. In the three narratives it becomes clear that results do not evolve in a rationally planned way, but are the result of emerging developments within the group of the involved people. The results cannot be reduced in a causal or linear fashion from the way they evolve. Moreover, I am part in this emergence because my research is not done from an outsider's position but from an insider's position.

Regarding the narratives emergence also reflects the analyses and reflexive labour. As my research progressed three themes became apparent. These are themes which apparently play there part in the UAS with regard to policymaking, with regard to way I practise my role as adviser and with regard to themes which are connected to Higher Education. Being reflexive towards what thematically presents itself in an emerging way, contributes to learn to understand something different about my daily practice. As such my movement of thought is part of the practised research methodology.

Taken everything together I qualify my research as radically reflexive. Radically reflexive research aims at clarifying the taken for granted assumptions of the researcher, within existing scientific literature and within local situations. However, this clarification is not meant to promote a radical change of the course, but enables to make apparent what could have been possible and what is excluded in the course of things. Logically the fact that a local situation is researched into by a participating insider demands for different criteria than validity and generalizability. By means of the

discussions and experiences within the tradition of auto-ethnographic research I formulated different criteria.

- 1 The research should testify of an analytical and reflexive approach of the narratives, in which the partiality of the researcher and his or her development in thinking must become apparent.
- 2 The researcher should as an observing participant be a full member of the different communities he or she researches into. The position of insider must be certain.
- 3 The narratives should offer a clear, stimulating, challenging, careful and enriching perspective on situations and social interactions about which is reported. For the involved in the situations the narratives should be plausible from the perspective of the researcher.
- 4 The research should be transferable, implying that the analyses, the reflections and the findings should resonate with the reader, and with people which more or less are working in comparable situations.

Due to the insider's position of the researcher the attention being paid to ethical responsibilities should be considerable. The people concerned must have consented to being present in the narratives, they must have had an opportunity to take notice of the narratives and if wished for to propose corrections. Moreover, personal privacy and discretion concerning some issues must be guaranteed. Of course there also is a responsibility for the reader: the reader should appreciate the care and openness of all the involved instead of depreciating the course of things.

With the different theoretical orientations, the criteria for scientificity and the acknowledged ethical responsibility the context is sketched for the chapters in which the narratives are point of departure.

The taken for granted assumptions of the researcher

At the start of radically reflexive research it is logic to consider two subjects. First of all the taken for granted assumptions of the researcher. Who is he or she and who does the research and with what kind of opinions and experiences? Secondly the question is by what he or she is troubled in his or her local situation and why?

In chapter 3 I give a sketch of my social genesis, of my – rather philosophical – perspective on my existence, my career, the choices I made at different times and of what I experienced as problematic in my work at the time of starting my research. After all, within a radically reflexive approach that which is assumed to be the matter (ontology) is seen as connected to the way it is perceived or experienced by somebody (epistemology). As a way of speaking, ontology and epistemology fuse. And the way somebody perceives does not come out of the blue, but entails a social history.

Roughly speaking I present myself as someone who in due course of his life has developed an allergy for unsubstantial authority, as someone who in his career as a mana-

ger always kept a bit of an ambivalent attitude with regard to the appreciation and effectiveness of a manager and as someone who with regard to an organizational philosophy is inspired by ideas about co-creativity and wisdom of the crowd. Therefore from my perspective the engagement of employees with their organization is important with regard to the chances on success of changes within organizations. In former projects in which I had the lead I tried to arrange engagement and also now engagement is an evident point of departure for me. From my perspective in the UAS I notice a constant wavering between a top down and bottom up approach with regard to policymaking.

The research into what happens in situations and what is produced in policymaking is the subject of the next three chapters of which the narratives are the point of departure. In the narratives, the analyses and the reflections it becomes apparent in which way my taken for granted assumptions play their role in what happens. Already that is an element of unpredictability that clarifies that policymaking is no rational and planned act.

Making sense of an internal branding project

To innovate the marketing policy a project was started with the point of departure that the marketing of an organization only makes sense if internally is lived up what is promised in the outside world. Therefore the first objective of the project became to articulate the actual present brand values, to be followed by trying to raise awareness of the employees of what connected everybody (process of internal branding). The raised awareness would help to reinforce the identity of the UAS and amongst others help to secure and to reinforce the market position.

In the narrative (chapter 4) I recount how within a period of 10 weeks the coordination team of the project drew up conclusions and recommendations for the Executive Board. These conclusions and recommendations concerned an evaluation of the effectiveness of the project, after two years after the start of the project. To what degree the brand values were recognized and shared? And were they experienced as steering? These were the basic questions for the evaluation.

In the narrative becomes apparent how in the ongoing interactions among the members of the coordination team an amount of interpretations about the evaluation were construed. In due course the interpretations which were attributed to the evaluation shifted with regard to content and implication. An eye catching shift was for instance that the members of the team started to talk about core values instead of brand values. A shift which in principle substantially increased the normative impact of the project.

Although the different members of the coordination team had different opinions and different interests, after 10 weeks there was a shared set of conclusions and recommendations. Moreover, the consensus had evolved in rather great harmony. Because

conclusions and recommendations are a matter of policymaking it was interesting to analyse and to reflect upon what had happened. With for me as a researcher and adviser an important note, namely that we had drawn recommendations and conclusions in which at least partly I could not find me, but still had agreed to. Moreover, I already had some serious doubts about the meaningfulness and attainability of this sort of projects. Apparently the recommendations and conclusions had organized themselves.

To explain why after 10 weeks we shared recommendations and conclusions I went into psychology. Concepts like social contagion and the avoidance of cognitive dissonance clarified how in cooperation among people something common evolves without control or planning of the people involved. Moreover, one can speak of interdependency which stimulates to make compromises, in which is calculated what will be attainable for the others involved and more specific for the client (in this case the Executive Board). Social contagion and cognitive dissonance clarified what is to be found about responsivity and interdependency in the work of Elias and Mead. The recommendations and conclusions entail traces of micro-political processes; they testify from ongoing negotiations about what would be presented as 'the truth'.

For me a question about the nature of my position became a hot issue. After all, I had some doubts about the project, I had some strong opinions about how to develop policy and I - despite 'myself' - participated in this project and agreed to a lot of things. Reflecting on these questions it appeared that everybody, neither I, despite my co-creative intentions, do not control interactions nor control why I am asked to do some tasks. A complex responsive process-perspective helped to clarify what is happening. The question was raised whether I functioned as a corporate jester within the UAS, the one who combines being recalcitrant and flexible and thus employable in certain projects. A next project helped to clarify this issue.

Drawing up performance agreements

Together with a colleague I was asked to organize the drawing up of performance agreements. Performance agreements are agreements which every UAS had to make with the Secretary of State of Education in 2012. Under pain of a budgetary reduction every UAS had to formulate (and realize) an amount of ambitions with regard to the quality of education, the personnel and the profiling of the UAS within the own region. As such these performance agreements are rather coercive with regard to the policy-making of a UAS.

In the narrative (in chapter 5) about the months in which the performance agreements were drawn up, I recount the internal political - sometimes Babylonian - process within senior management, as far as experienced by me. Moreover, it becomes apparent in which way the organization with regard to the available information and the existing policy related to what was demanded by the performance agreements. In the way these topics were handled mutual relations and the process of decision ma-

king became visible, a way of decision making sometimes supported by lucky coincidences. In the narrative is to observe which folds are smoothed over in the final document regarding the performance agreements.

With respect to my position and my acting I again asked the question if in my work as an adviser traits of a jestership were to be recognized. To explore I related my work to the work of a consultant, a profession which evolved from the beginning of the twentieth century. I explored and criticized the role of an adviser from a complex responsive process perspective. In the process of drawing up the agreements complex responsibility became apparent by mapping which unforeseen occurrences and the way micro-power within interdependent relations, 'helped' to bring about the final results. The perspective on the efforts of a jester was accentuated. In a foolish and unpredictable world - in which Higher Education is subjected to a way of producing education comparable to the way McDonalds produces food - the jester appeared of use as a non-threatening mediator among a lot of different points of view. Although, by reading about the presence of a bricoleur new questions about my jestership evolved. In chapter 7 I will come back to that.

Consent about dissent

The intensive journalistic and political attention paid to mismanagement in amongst others some educational institutions put the subject of jestership also on the agenda of the Executive Board. An appointment of me as a Corporate Critical Friend was considered, as one of the possibilities to prevent abuses. For different reasons this idea was abandoned.

In the narrative (in chapter 6) I recount about what discussions arose about the idea of constructive dissent. Stimulating constructing dissent is a topic which is put on the agenda by the Ministry of Education in order to prevent mismanagement in Higher Education. The discussions were held within the Executive Board, within and sometimes together with a think tank which I organized to that purpose. It appeared to be easier to discuss about the necessity of dissent, than to have a dissenting discussion about a topic. Hierarchy, power and strategy remained present in every conversation. From an exploration of literature I learned that the approach of power issues from the tradition of Critical Management Studies is rather unilateral and linear. As if management is the big wrongdoer and every times finds ways to push through its interests. From an analysis and a reflection from a complex responsive process-perspective it became clear that management is no monolithic entity and as everybody wrestles with the style of management which is imposed by for instance the performance agreements. This wrestling happens all the time and an important conclusion is that one should find more opportunity to dwell on what we 'actually' are doing.

The final

The analyses and reflections upon the narratives stimulated to understand differently the daily practice of my work. To learn to understand differently - movement of thought - is as indicated part of the research methodology. The acquired insight is presented at the end (in chapter 7) with the purpose of describing what is going on in my job. Apart from that I account for the research and the used methodology.

In my research it became clear that within the UAS in different places people wrestle with what I called performativity. The unilateral emphasis on efficiency as the controlling principle is debated and no fixed matter. Moreover, it appeared that management is no monolithic entity and that different of the involved colleagues wrestle to render meaning to the policy. A need is articulated to dwell on what is happening. To interrupt once and a while daily business could help.

Apart from that I conclude that my responsibilities have less the traits of a jestership but more affinity with what is described as a bricoleur. A bricoleur is a handyman within an organization which on a pragmatic base is able to connect different opinions. However, an important addition compared with existing literature is, that a bricoleur should be blessed with quite some irony to put into perspective the different points of view, and the unilateral emphasis on efficiency related to performativity.

It appeared that performativity is a debated way of policymaking because it is experienced as a meaningless intrusion. Therefore I was able to connect my research with a nationwide discussion about educational reform. I did this by holding up to the light the plans of the association "Beter Onderwijs Nederland" to conclude that these plans are only a continuation and intensification of the performativity cult, in which the importance of the voice of professionals in the debate is denied and subscribed at the same time.

With regard to policymaking I conclude that policy evolves in an unpredictable way. If intended policy should become reality than I suggest that for managers it is far more important to participate in the daily micro-political reality than to spread some blueprints from behind their desks.



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